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STORIES OF IMAGINATION

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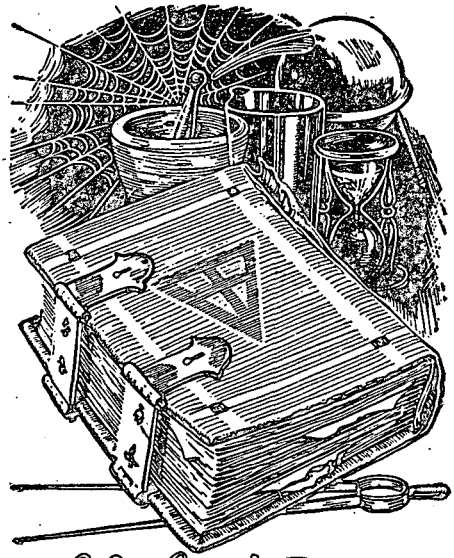

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STORIES OF IMAGINATION

SEPTEMBER 1962
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Illustrating *Plane Jane*

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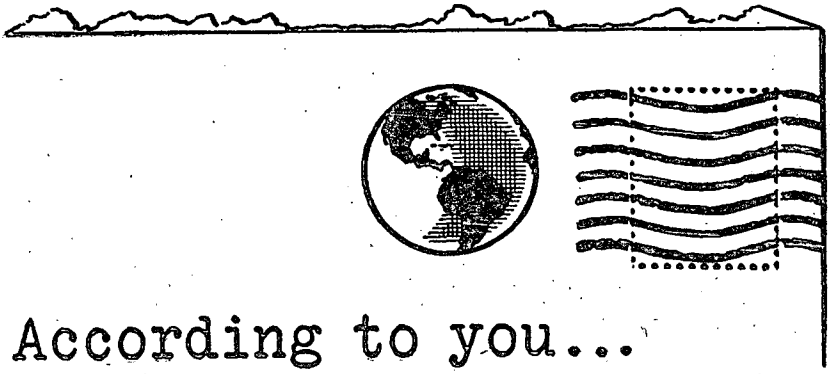

According to you...

Dear Miss Goldsmith:

One story in the May FANTASTIC caught my attention: "Ripeness Is All." It is apparent, to me at least, that author Roarke has been reading Johnson's *Rasselas*. The story is such a close parallel to that book that I had to go through and compare points. I won't tax your patience by relating all the similarities; suffice it to say there are many. Even though it's close to plagiarism, the story is good, in that it shows a modern application for Johnson's story of the Prince of Abyssinia.

"Planet of Dread," I must say, was somewhat of a disappointment; but only because I was expecting something equal to the caliber of "Mad Planet" and "Red Dust," which is large-bore stuff. Nevertheless, it is up to most of the stuff being written today; and it's good to see Murray Leinster back in circulation.

Sharkey's little tidbit was welcome. Although the reasoning was, at times, shaky, the story was nicely contrived. It was similar to Westlake's recent "Look Before You Leap," only, I think, better. Keep Sharkey around.

Ah! "The Piebald Hippogriff!" It was pure fantasy, delightfully unbelievable, and for that reason, beautiful! Looks like she should spend more time away from *Vorpal Glass*, if this is the result!

I am new on the bloody battlefield of the Bunch-o-phobes and Bunch-o-philes, so I won't make any rash value judgments . . yet. But, as to "The Survey Trip," I feel that I can express an opinion. If this is an example of his writing, I like it. He is like a Kerouac of sf, at least in his narrative style. In beat books, it's

(*Continued on page 127*)

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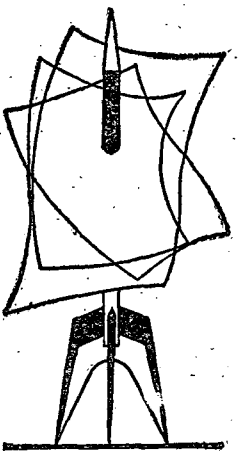

EDITORIAL

BY the time you read this, your devoted editor will have recently returned from a jaunt (a business trip, of course), to the far reaches of Africa—specifically, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Always having the interests of our readers at heart, no matter how far we may be from desk and typewriter, part of our self-imposed assignment in Zanzibar was to track down rumors of a strange tribe, deep in the hilly interior of the jungled island, which reportedly has the ability to levitate.

We spared no effort. Our dhow docked (or is it dock dhowed?) at the teeming port of Zanzibar, we immediately engaged native bearers for the dangerous safari to the hinterlands. I will not bore you by describing the many kills we made en route, nor the particularly narrow escape I had from the fangs of a gaboon viper. (The viper, thanks to its speed of stomach, also managed a narrow escape from *my* fangs —which were a bon voyage gift from the Sultan

After twelve days of weary struggling, hacking through the jungle growth and all that jazz, we reached the alleged home of the levitators. The village was strangely silent. We approached cautiously, our scouts fanning out ahead. Finally I strode up to the hut of the chief and rapped upon its thatched roof with my rifle.

"Yambo!" I said. (That is "Hi, there" in Swahili.) There was no reply, except for a cloud of dust and insects that were dislodged from the roof.

In short, the village was deserted. And, as I realized later, how natural! The jungle telegraph had spread the news of my coming far in advance. The natives, not wishing to yield up the secret of their strange psionic powers, had determined to avoid me. So—the entire population levitated itself high into the sky. If I had only looked *up* while I was there, I would have found them, found the answer to the whole devilish thing. But not me. After that first encounter with the gaboon viper, I never lifted my eyes from the ground all the way.

And so our party returned to Zanzibar. If you would like to buy at a discount any of the jun—I mean, genuine native artifacts—I purchased at the Arab bazaar, drop around. If there's nobody here, just look up.—N. L.

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Haunted by a past that seems to be slipping away and a present of meaningless shadows, Adam Francis wonders if he's real. And if he is, why this persistent feeling that he's seeing everything as an outsider who doesn't belong?

PLANE JANE

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrator SUMMERS

BY three-dimensional standards, the room was grotesque. To the man sitting in it, however, it was not in the least grotesque. It was a four-dimensional room and he was a four-dimensional man, and he saw it in the same way a three-dimensional man sees a three-dimensional room. "Flatness" is a relative term, its conformation wholly dependent upon the interpretation of the viewer, and despite their dimensional difference the two parallel universes that multi-dimensional space gave birth to are sisters under the skin.

The man's name was Francis Adam. He was an engineer, and his hobby was miniature-painting. On the desk before him lay the sheet of paper on which he had just finished drawing the diagram of the micro-macro transdimensional projector which he had been working on for the past four months and which he had finally completed that afternoon. He had stayed late at the plant in order to expedite the preparation of the patent application, and he was very tired. The specification would have to wait till tomorrow.

Presently he straightened up and filled a cup from a small electric coffee pot. He drank the coffee black, then, after lighting a

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cigarette, he leaned forward and began checking the diagram. Almost instantly he gave a sigh of exasperation. The mistake he had detected was a minor one in itself, but it threw the entire figure off. He would have to do the whole thing over again.

Suddenly a knock sounded on the door. He frowned. Other than himself and the night watchman, there was no one else at the plant, and he had given the night watchman strict orders not to disturb him. He went over to the door and depressed the one-way transparency button. His frown faded and an expression compounded of pleasure and puzzlement supplanted it when he saw the brown-haired girl with the heart-shaped face standing in the adjoining machine-shop. Deactivating the personal reactive pattern that made the room impregnable to anyone other than himself, he opened the door. "Why Barbara, I thought you'd gone home," he said. And then, forgetting company regulations in his eagerness to please her, "Come on in."

She stepped into the room. He saw the bludgeon pistol then, with its ugly muzzle pointing toward the center of his forehead. Disbelief stunned him, and he raised his eyes incredulously to hers. He rejected what he saw in them instantly. Just as the pistol coughed, he jerked his head. Then he saw the blinding lights, and a moment later, blackness came.

The date was the eighth of June, nineteen hundred and sixty-two.

I

THE people passing in and out of the big office building were shadows. The people on the sidewalk were shadows too, and so were the cabs and cars and buses moving up and down the street. *Even as I am a shadow,* thought Adam Francis grimly, pushing his way through the big revolving door.

The office he wanted was on the sixth floor, and the lettering on its door read, *J. A. Morrow, Psychoanalyst. Please come in.* The outer-office was empty, but presently the inner-office door opened, and a girl stepped out. She was wearing a chic blue suit that brought out the blueness of her eyes and the trueness of her shape. Her hair was shoulder-length, and the hue of molten gold, and her complexion brought to mind the richness of Guernsey cream. And yet she was not beautiful. "Mr. Francis?"

Adam nodded. "I have an appointment with Dr. Morrow."

"This way, please."

He followed her into a pleasantly appointed room. The girl

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sat down behind a mahogony desk. "Sit down, Mr. Francis. I need a few basic items of information before we begin."

Adam sagged into an armchair. "I—I thought you were your secretary," he said. "I had no idea that Dr. Morrow was a woman."

"The friend who recommended me should have told you." She opened a small notebook. "Shall we start with your age?"

"Twenty-nine," Adam said.

"What kind of work do you do?"

"I'm a draftsman."

"Place of employment?"

"I'm unemployed at the moment. But I've plenty of money, so there's no need for you to worry about your fee."

"I'm not worried about my fee . . . Where were you employed last?"

"At Mephisto Products, Incorporated. I quit them last week." He leaned forward confidentially. "The people whom I was forced to work with were so un-co-operative that efficiency was impossible. It reached a point where I was forced to leave."

Her blue eyes lifted from the notebook. "Indeed? And did these fellow-workers of yours persecute you in any way?"

"You could call it that, I suppose." Abruptly he lay back in the chair. "I'd rather not talk about it."

"Very well. Where do you live, Mr. Francis?"

"I have a room at the Northside Hotel."

"Are you married?"

"Most certainly not!"

Again, her blue eyes lifted from the notebook. This time they seemed to stab into his mind. But all she said was, "Place of birth?"

"Greenview, New York."

"Schooling?"

"Greenview Elementary School, Greenview High School, and Gaynor University."

SHE finished making the entries in her notebook, and stood up. She seemed puzzled about something. "Very well, Mr. Francis. You may lie on the couch if you think it will help you to relax, or you may stay where you are."

"I'll try the couch."

She drew up a footstool and sat down beside him. "And now, please begin."

"I'm a shadow," Adam said.

"Just you yourself?"

"No—everyone. Everything. It's an impression I get every time I look at someone or something. Every time I look in a mirror. A feeling of unreality."

"How long have you had this attitude?"

"Ever since I quit my job. It's more of a growing conviction than an attitude, though. At first

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it was only a vague suspicion, but now it's reached a point where my past seems to be slipping away . . . disintegrating." He shuddered. "I'm—I'm afraid I'm losing my mind."

"That's very much to be doubted, Mr. Francis. Reality is a personal reaction to phenomena, and whenever an individual's reaction deviates from the reaction of the majority, there's generally a sound reason behind it. He may be unaware of what the reason is, but that doesn't make his acting upon it any the less reasonable, or him any less of a reasonable being. However, the word 'shadow' tells me very little. Exactly in what sense do you mean it?"

Adam thought for a moment. Then, "I mean it in the sense that people and objects seem somehow meaningless, not so much in themselves but in their relationship to me. It's as though I was an outsider and didn't belong . . . and all the while my past seems less and less real."

"What do you do days?" Dr. Morrow asked abruptly.

"Why—why, I sit in my hotel room mostly."

"And nights—do you go out?"

"No. There's nowhere I care to go."

"Aren't you interested in girls?"

"Girls!" he said with sudden vehemence. "No, I'm not interested in them! They're shadows too."

"Would you say I was a shadow?"

"Yes, I would say it!"

"Do you have any recurrent dreams, Mr. Francis?"

He shifted on the couch. "One."

"Tell me about it."

I'M sitting in a room at a table or a workbench that runs the entire length of one of the walls. It's a large room filled with machines—a machine shop of some kind. I know this, even though I am facing the wall and cannot see what is behind me. Before me on the workbench or table lies a blueprint for part of a unit, but I have no idea of what the unit is. Someone is sitting beside me, someone I know very well, but someone I can't for the life of me recall. In the dream I try to turn my head in order to see who it is, but my head will turn only just so far, and try as I will I can't turn it far enough to permit me to see who is sitting beside me. I keep trying and trying, and finally the mental effort wakes me up."

"And you have no idea who this person is?"

"Not the slightest."

"We'll let the dream go for now, Mr. Francis," she said. "I have a hunch that it will resolve itself, once the factors that oc-

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casioned it are unearthed. Our primary concern now is your 'shadow-complex'—your conviction that nothing and no one is completely real. I think that the best way to cope with this will be by concentrating on your own reality first. If you can convince yourself that you are real, you will be less inclined to doubt the reality of the people and objects surrounding you."

Adam sat up on the couch. "I'll be glad to try."

"Good. I recommend that you begin revisiting the places that played an important part in your past, and re-examine their backgrounds. If in each case you will make an effort to establish your past reality, your waning belief in your present reality should be strengthened, and eventually it should be strengthened to a point where you can no longer think of yourself—or, by extension, anyone or anything else—as a 'shadow'. Provided, of course," she amended, with an enigmatic smile, "your 'shadow-complex' doesn't turn out to be founded on fact. It will be best if you begin with Mephisto Products, Incorporated. Go there and look around. Talk with the people you used to work with, if you can. All right?"

Adam nodded. "I'll try."

"Let's see, this is Thursday the fourteenth. Suppose I put you down for two-thirty Monday afternoon? That should give you plenty of time to revisit the Mephisto Products plant . . . and to react to it." After making the entry, she jotted down a set of numerals on a slip of paper, folded it and handed it to him. "This is my phone number. If you should happen to want to see me before Monday, please don't hesitate to call."

II

ARRIVING at his hotel, he did not go directly upstairs, but stopped in the bar first. It was here that he had run across the man who had recommended Dr. Morrow to him. Well no, not actually recommended her to *him* exactly. As a matter of fact, Adam had eavesdropped on a conversation the man had had with the bartender in which the former had praised Dr. Morrow to the skies. The man was not present today, however, and Adam was disappointed. Now that he had met Dr. Morrow, he wanted to know more about her. What her first name was, for instance. Was it "Joan"? he wondered. Or "Jessica"? Maybe it was just plain "Jane".

He put off visiting Mephisto Products, Incorporated till the following afternoon. The plant was located several miles outside the city limits and stood in a green valley that was otherwise

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given over to truck farms. After he got off the bus he had to walk two miles along a new blacktop road. He remembered the road vaguely, but he couldn't remember ever walking along it before. He couldn't remember riding the bus out from the city before either, for that matter. How *had* he commuted then?

He passed a big red-oak and noticed a gray hardtop parked beneath the low-hanging foliage, but he saw no sign of the driver. Five minutes later he reached the plant gate. The buildings beyond the wire-mesh fence were new, but there was an odd aspect about them. They were out of line, and looked as though they had settled. There was an air of desuetude about the place, and the tall handsome stacks that should have been emitting some manner of miasma were emitting nothing at all. A short distance within the fence two workmen were detaching an object of some kind from the hook of an overhead traveling crane. There was something strangely familiar about them.

Above the gate, a big sign said, MEPHISTO PRODUCTS, INC. The gate was open, but there was a plant guard standing before it. No, not a plant guard—a state trooper. He looked Adam over with a professional eye. "Hello," Adam said politely. "Okay if I go in?"

"I'm not standing here for my health, Mac."

Beyond the gate, two patrol cars were parked in front of the nearest building. Lounging near the entrance was another trooper. Adam frowned. "Is something wrong?" he asked the first trooper.

"Looks like it, doesn't it. What'd you want to go in for?"

"I used to work here," Adam said. "I thought I'd—" The sudden interest in the trooper's eyes made him pause. "What's wrong with that?"

The trooper turned toward the gate. "Mort," he called, "tell the lieutenant to come out here. Somebody just showed up that I think he'd like to talk to." He faced Adam again. "How long did you work for this outfit, Mac?"

"Five years. I—"

The trooper was staring at him. "Five *years!* Why, the place hasn't even been here five days!"

Looking past the man's head, Adam saw a third trooper emerge from the nearest building and start walking toward the gate. The trooper who had summoned him fell in behind. Adam swallowed. Glancing at the two workmen standing beneath the traveling crane, he saw that neither of them had moved one iota since he had first noticed them. The strange sense of familiarity that he had experienced earlier returned with a vengeance, adding

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surrealistic overtones to the inexplicable situation he had blundered into. "I—I think I'll be on my way," he said, taking a tentative step backward and then bolting off across the fields. The bullets which the troopers fired over his head served to accelerate rather than to slow his footsteps, and when he looked back a little while later and saw that the lieutenant and several other troopers were giving pursuit, he upped his speed yet another notch. A man standing on a nearby hill with a pair of binoculars raised to his eyes gave him a momentary scare; then he realized that the man could be nothing more than an innocent bystander—a bird watcher, probably—and plunged boldly by.

AFTER scaring a killdeer half out of its wits, he entered a small woods. Halfway through it, he veered to the left, slid down into a small gully and followed a dry creekbed out onto a wide meadow. The banks were lower here, but by stooping as he ran, he was able to keep his head and shoulders beneath the level of the meadow. Presently the gully approached a group of farm buildings closely enough to enable him to dodge behind a big barn. He gained entry by means of a loose plank, climbed a wooden ladder into a dusty haymow and collapsed gasping into the hay.

He lay there for a long while, asking himself over and over why he had run away, each time receiving no reply.

Suddenly the barn door slid open, and a man clad in blue coveralls came in. From his prone position in the haymow, Adam had a good view, of the front section of the building's interior, and he watched the man walk over to a big workbench, pick up a large C-clamp, and start back toward the door. Before the man reached it, however, a trooper appeared in the opening, and stepped inside. "See anything of a tall brown-haired joker in a dark-blue suit?" he asked the coveralled man.

The coveralled man shook his head. "What you want him for?"

"Resisting arrest. But we want him for something else too. He used to work for the Mephisto outfit—or claims he did."

The coveralled man stiffened. "Worked for them! Then maybe he knows why they built their plant here."

"Even more important, maybe he knows how they built it without anybody seeing them do it. Well, keep an eye out."

"You bet I will. I ain't got no use for anybody connected with an outfit mean enough to ruin five acres of good cabbage-land for no other reason than to set up a phony plant with a bunch of dummy workers in it."

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"How come you people waited so long before notifying the authorities?"

"Old John Driscoll—that's the owner of the property—didn't come back from Florida this spring, and left the land lie idle, so when we saw this plant built on it we figured he'd sold out. Of course we wondered how it could have gone up so fast and without anybody noticing, but we didn't really suspect anything was wrong till the kids got inside and come home and started telling crazy stories about it being filled with people that didn't move or breathe, and that looked exactly alike. We acted then, though, let me tell you. The nerve of someone pulling a stunt like that! I'd like to get my hands on whoever it was!"

"So should we," said the trooper. He glanced around the barn. "Any chance that the man we're looking for could have sneaked in here?"

"I don't see how. I've been in the yard all afternoon. Damned automatic pump's been acting up."

The two men went outside, and the door slid back into place. A large drop of sweat separated itself from Adam's forehead and splashed into the hay. His reality was turning out to have holes in it a yard wide.

Five acres wide.

DESCENDING the ladder, he found a knothole in the sliding door, and peered out into the yard. A short distance away, the coveralled man was clamping a length of pipe onto a sturdy sawhorse. As Adam watched, another man appeared—a big beefy man with a wart on the side of his nose. He was wearing an olive-drab hiking outfit, and there was a pair of binoculars suspended from his fat neck. Adam recognized him as the bird watcher he had seen on the hill.

Simultaneously he had a notion that he had known the man before, on another world, under a different set of circumstances. The notion was so ridiculous that he kicked it out of his mind.

The bird watcher talked with the coveralled man for a while, and throughout the conversation he kept glancing in this direction and that, as though fearful lest a rare bird would fly by without his seeing it. Presently he departed from the scene along the same route by which he had entered it.

Adam returned to the haymow and stayed there till nightfall, then he slipped out of the barn and made his way across the starlit fields to the outskirts of the city. He entered a phone booth that stood in front of a closed-for-the-night service station and dialed Dr. Morrow's number. Would she still be in her

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office? He wondered. The chances were a hundred to one against it.

"Dr. Morrow speaking."

The reassuring warmth of her voice put his doubts to rout. "This is Adam Francis—may I see you right away?"

He was prepared for any number of objections, but none of them materialized. All she said was, "Very well, Mr. Francis, I'll be waiting for you."

* * *

ARE you all right, Mr. Francis? she asked anxiously when she saw the condition of his clothing. "You look as though you've had a bad time."

"Sure, I'm all right."

He tried to tell her everything at once, but she stopped him and led him into the next room. A pot of coffee sat upon a little hot plate on her desk. She filled two cups and handed one to him. "Now, Mr. Francis," she said, sitting down behind her desk, "please begin."

Feeling calmer, he sat back in one of the armchairs and came through with a reasonably coherent account of his adventure. Her composure deserted her when he came to the part about the trooper at the gate, but she regained it quickly. Nevertheless, he knew that she had been surprised. "Well, that much is behind you at least," she said when he had finished. "I'm sorry to have had to expose you to such an unpleasant experience, but it was unavoidable."

He was put out. "Then you knew what I'd run into all along!"

"Except for your run-in with the law. I didn't know that the plant had been brought to their attention yet." She sighed. "Now it's only a matter of time before they'll tie you in with the homun—" She left the unfinished word hanging in midair. "Did you see anyone else besides the people you told me about?" she asked.

"Just a bird watcher." He told her about the fat man.

A frown marred the marmoreal smoothness of her forehead. "Well let's hope it was birds he was watching," she said. "He could very well have been watching you—although I don't see how they could have caught on so soon. No, I'm sure they couldn't have," she went on, the frown fading. "They don't even know what to look for. I think we're safe on that score for now."

"How about throwing a little light on whatever it is you're talking about."

She smiled. "I wish I could, but more information at this point would only confuse you further. You'll just have to trust me, Mr. Francis." Then, "Do you have a car?"

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He started to nod his head. Then he started to shake it. "I—I don't know," he said presently.

"We'll use mine then."

"Where are we going?"

"Deeper into your past."

Outside, it had begun to rain, and phalanx after phalanx of raindrops were driving against the window. "And you're going with me?" Adam asked incredulously.

"Yes. There may be complications. What did you do before you went to work for Mephisto Products, Incorporated, Mr. Francis?"

"I—I attended a university," Adam said. "Gaynor University. It's about—about three hundred miles south of here."

"Good. We'll leave for there at once. Go back to your hotel, change your clothes, pack your things and check out. I'll pick you up an hour from now."

III

THEY drove all night, alternating at the wheel. They caught several newscasts before midnight, but while one of them described "the mystery-man" who had showed up at "the mystery-plant" that afternoon, the description was of so general a nature that no one, save perhaps the trooper who had supplied it, could have applied it specifically to Adam. No, there was nothing to worry about, Dr. Morrow told him, visibly relieved. "Yet," she added.

Dawn found them winding through a series of wooded hills. Adam kept an eye peeled for familiar land marks, but failed to spot a single one. And yet he knew which turns to make, and the names of all the towns in the vicinity of the university. "I don't understand it," he said. "I must have passed this way dozens of times, and yet nothing seems familiar."

Dr. Morrow was driving. "I wouldn't worry about it, Mr. Francis," she said.

"I can't help it. It was the same way with the Mephisto Products plant. I knew where it was all right, but I had no recollection of ever actually being there. I could remember the road, but I couldn't remember walking or driving along it."

"And the buildings—did you remember them?"

"Not—not exactly. They were different, somehow. They—they seemed to be out of line. Now why should that be?"

"I'd say that the builder was in such a hurry that he forgot to dr—to lay the footings. Shall we stop some place for breakfast?"

They chose a combination roadside diner and service station. Adam insisted on paying for the meal and the gas. "You'll regret your prodigality when you

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get my bill," she said, laughing. She drove around the gray hardtop that was parked by the next pump, and pulled back onto the highway.

"If you can clear up the mystery of what happened to my past, I don't care how much you charge me. Right now, though, there's another mystery I'd like cleared up. What does 'J' stand for?"

"Jane," she said. "What else?"

"That's funny—I had a hunch it would be just plain Jane."

She gave a slight start. "Did you?" And then, "Oh, you mean 'plain'."

"That's what I said—'plain'. 'Jane's' a nice name—I like it," he went on. "I hope you like 'Adam' as well."

" 'Adam's' a swell name," she said. "Which turn should I take?"

They had come to a crossroads. "The right one, I think."

"We'll try it."

THE road led into hills that grew more thickly wooded by the minute. Houses became more and more scattered, finally disappeared altogether. "What an odd location for a university," Jane said.

"There it is now," said Adam, pointing. "You can see it through the trees if you look hard enough."

The trees grew right up to its very doors and windows, and the winding blacktop road into which Jane presently turned had more of the aspect of an anfractuous tunnel than it did a road. In common with the blacktop job that gave access to Mephisto Products, Incorporated, it showed no signs of wear and tear. The university itself consisted of exactly one building —a big red-brick affair with a vaulted entrance. The structure was slightly awry, and a jagged crack blemished its otherwise handsome façade.

"No footings again," Jane said, stopping the car. "Our builder was in a hurry all right." She opened the door and got out. "Coming, Adam?"

He joined her reluctantly. Far from evoking a sense of nostalgia, the sight of his alma mater gave rise to a feeling of uneasiness. "Do you think we should go inside?" he asked nervously.

"Well of course we should. It's bound to be discovered sooner or later, and we may never get another chance."

He followed her up a short flight of steps. Seen at close-range, the building had a blurred appearance: some of its bricks blended in with adjacent bricks, and there was a general absence of sharp edges and clearly demarcated lines. Inscribed on a white plaque above the vaulted

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entrance were the words GAYNOR UNIVERSITY.

One of the two adjoining doors was open. He preceded Jane into a long corridor that was unlighted save for the morning brightness streaming in behind them. In the gloom ahead he saw a man approaching, and he touched Jane's arm. Together they waited for him to come up.

They waited and they waited. The man did not move. He appeared to be frozen in the midst of a long stride. His right arm hung on a slight forward angle, and his left slanted slightly to the rear. Both were immobile.

Suddenly Jane gasped. "Why of course!" she said, and hurried down the corridor.

Adam followed. Something about the man terrified him. Coming up to him, he saw why.

The man was himself.

Well no, not really himself, but a homunculus created in his own image. Somehow, that was even worse, and for a moment his senses swarmed. "It's all right, Adam," Jane said. "There's nothing to be afraid of."

HE looked at the homunculus more closely. It was a replica of himself all right, just as the two workmen at the Mephisto Products plant had been, he realized now, but the features were slightly blurred. So was the entire figure, for that matter, and the dark-blue suit that clothed it

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seemed less of a garment than it did a part of the body itself. The brown hair did not ring quite true either, and reaching out and touching it, he discovered that it was a single unit, and as hard as a rock. The suit was equally as hard, he found, exploring farther, and so were the arms and legs.

"It's made out of the same material as the building," Jane explained. "Paint."

He stared at her. *"Paint?"*

She nodded. "Let's look at the classrooms."

They stepped through the doorway nearest them, and into the room beyond. It was a good sized room, but the desks that filled it made it seem small. Behind each desk, a homunculus sat, and standing at the head of the "class" beside a big blackboard was another homunculus. The room's only illumination was provided by the morning sunlight streaming through its three windows. The windows fell considerably short of being perfect rectangles, and there was no glass in them.

Adam looked at the nearest "student". A feeling of anguish all but overcame him, then went away as abruptly as it had come into being. The "student" was a "girl". It had a heart-shaped face, hazel eyes and light-brown hair. On the front of its blue pullover was a big "G". Looking around the room, he saw that fully half of the homunculi were "girls", each identical. The other half of the homunculi were "young men," also "wearing" a blue pullover with a big "G" on the front, and each a replica of himself.

Even the blue-suited "instructor" was a replica.

He leaned weakly against the wall. "I—I don't understand," he said. "Why are they all me? And that girl. For a second I could have sworn that I know her—know her very well."

Sadness touched Jane's face, and she looked away. "You do," she said. Then, "Shall we look at the other rooms?"

HE followed her back out into the corridor. The other rooms proved to be duplicates of the first, save for one, and that one differed in only two respects: there was a complex diagram of some kind on the blackboard, and the "instructor" was pointing toward it with a long pointer. "Well," Jane said, looking around the final room, "I think we've seen just about all there is to see. Shall we go?"

"The sooner the better," Adam said.

They started for the door—and stopped in their tracks. One of the two men who had edged into the room was about Adam's age and build, and as strikingly

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handsome as he was vaguely familiar. The other man was big and beefy, and there was a wart on the side of his nose. Suddenly Adam remembered the gray hardtop that had been parked in front of Jane's Chevrolet at the service-station diner. It was the same gray hardtop that he had seen parked beneath the redoak on his way to the Mephisto Products plant.

The bird watcher hadn't been watching birds after all. He had been watching Adam. Somewhere along the line he had picked up a henchman. "I don't think I need to tell you why we're here," he said. "You can't be that far gone, even if they did have to call in a Plane Jane." And then, much less affably, "Hand it over, and make sure it's the real one this time!"

Adam ignored him. "This," he said to Jane, "is the man I was telling you about. I thought he was watching a killdeer, but instead he was watching me."

"And before that," Jane said, "he was watching the plant, waiting for you to show up." She confronted the bogus bird-watcher. "You could have got to him much sooner if you'd given some thought to the psychological implications of the word 'Mephisto'."

The man gave her an ugly look. "You," he said, "have an unusually long nose, even for a Plane Jane." And then, "Take care of her, George."

"You bet, Uncle Charlie!" the other man said, whipping something out of his pocket and stepping forward. "I'll—"

Thwack! His head jerked sideways as Jane's upswinging purse caught him on the side of the face, and the switch-blade he had drawn fell to the floor. Jane stooped and snatched it up just as Adam's right fist found Uncle Charlie's chin. Uncle Charlie reeled into George, and the two of them staggered out into the hall and collided with the "striding" homunculus. All three figures went down.

Jane handed him the knife, slipped out of her shoes, and peeled off her stockings. Both George and Uncle Charlie were out cold, and using a stocking apiece, she had them trussed helplessly in a matter of seconds. Adam observed the proceedings with rather round eyes. Quite a number of questions occurred to him, but he voiced only one of them. "What have you got in your purse?" he asked as he accompanied her through the entrance. "An anvil?"

She laughed. "Not exactly. However, there are five pounds of shot sewn into the lining." She paused on the steps, as though a thought had just struck her. "I'll be right back." She re-entered the building.

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The gray hardtop was parked at the foot of the steps, and while he was waiting for her he raised the hood, removed the distributor and threw it into the underbrush. He threw the switch-blade after it just as Jane came back through the entrance.

DRIVING down the winding road, Adam said, "He called you a plain Jane. I don't think you're plain at all."

She gave him a warm look. "Thank you, sir, she said. But he didn't mean quite what you thought he meant."

He hesitated for a moment. Then, "I—I must be pretty far gone. When he said 'hand it over' I didn't have the remotest notion of what he was talking about—and yet I remember him from somewhere."

"No, Adam, you're not far gone at all—you've withdrawn temporarily from reality, that's all. Your withdrawal was occasioned by two factors—one emotional and one physical—and as a result it's more complicated than ordinarily would have been the case. I don't know yet what the emotional factor was, but I do know that the physical factor was the blow you received on the head."

"But I didn't receive any blow on the head!"

"Not in your present form—no. But you received one—take my word for it. Blood and bludgeon shells don't lie."

"All right," he said. "Granted for the moment that someone did lay me low with some manner of gruesome weapon. Who was it?"

"One of our two friends back at the university possibly. Or, if not one of them, someone who's working with them. I don't know myself how many of them we have to deal with yet, but even if I did, it wouldn't do any good for me to brief you any more at this point, Adam, because until you regain at least part of your three-plus memory, no bells will ring."

"My *three-plus* memory?"

"See?" she said. "No bells. Until they begin to ring, I can't tell you a thing—and when they do begin to ring, I won't need to."

"Let's get on with your peripatetic psychotherapy then. What's the next item on your agenda?"

"It's on the same order as the first two. What did you do before you attended the university, Adam?"

"I—I was in the army," Adam said.

THE camp was located in an isolated valley, fifty miles from nowhere. A dirt road approached to within two miles of it, then veered off sharply in another direction. At the veering-

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off point, another road—a brand new blacktop job—struck off across a stretch of countryside that was notable only for the number of rocks and boulders scattered over it and for the utter absence of anything else.

Adam turned gratefully into the new road. He was sick of ruts, and his pine ached from the innumerable bumps it had absorbed. Jane, in a similar mood, lay luxuriously back on the seat beside him. "I was beginning to think we'd never find the place," she said.

"Let's hope no one else has."

Apparently no one had. At any rate, there were no signs of life in or about the sprawling assortment of barracks, mess halls, PX's, officers' quarters, orderly rooms, and motor pools that presently came into view. Still life, yes—there were signs galore of that. Adam scowled at the immobile sentry standing at port arms by the ingate. Save for its uniform, it was a dead-image of Adam himself.

So was the sentry standing by the out-gate.

So was the PFC they passed as they drove along the camp road.

So was the captain they saw on a big parade ground drilling three platoons of troops.

So were the three platoons of troops.

Farther down the road they came to a motor pool that contained four jeeps, two weapons-carriers, a cargo truck and a staff car. "I'll bet you none of them have motors," Jane said.

Adam stopped the Chevrolet and got out and looked. None of them did. "Which proves what?" he said, climbing back in behind the wheel.

"That in common with all of mankind's inventions, the one we have to deal with here is subject to the human factor."

He let the enigmatic remark pass, and drove on. In the last town they had gone through they had bought food and blankets, agreeing that it would be more practical to sleep in the camp, should it prove to be empty, than to drive any farther. The problem now was to find suitable quarters, and presently it solved itself when a building much less military in nature than the others came into sight. It was three stories high, was fronted by a stately four-column portico, and was topped by three big chimneys. The frieze that ran the gamut of the entablature succeeded admirably in conveying the owner's name without the slightest detriment to decor—

G * E * N * E * R * A * L * F * R * A * N * C * I * S * G * E * N * E * R * A * L * F * R * A * N * C * I * S * G * E * N * E * R * A * L * F * R * A * N * C * I * S * G * E * N * E * R * A *

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L*F*R*A*N*C*I*S*G*E*N*E*R*A*L*F*R*A*N*C*I*S*G*E*N*E*R*A*L

—and parked by the portico steps were two jeeps and a staff car, each appended by a realistic set of tire tracks in the dust.

Adam pulled up behind the staff car, and both of them got out.

Jane stood with her hands on her hips, staring up at the frieze. At length, "I've seen examples of wish-fulfillment before," she said, "but this one takes the cake. What were you in the army, Adam?"

"A—a PFC," Adam said sheepishly.

"I thought so."

THEY ascended the portico-steps. The big front door was wide open, and gave access to a high-ceilinged hall which in turn led to a large living room. The living room had no illumination of its own, but enough of the absconding daylight came through its windows to enable them to distinguish a huge fireplace and several voluminous chairs. One of the chairs stood by the fireplace, and there was an officer sitting in it.

Adam grimaced. "Hi, Adam," he said.

"Hi yourself," said the officer, standing up. Then, "Get them, men!"

None of the four M.P.'s who stepped out of the shadows had Adam's face. Neither did the officer, who, in the radiance of the gasoline lantern which he presently lighted, turned out to be a chicken colonel. "Well," he said to Adam, "welcome back to camp. Your buddies have missed you. I had a hunch you'd come straight to General Francis' humble abode to report in."

The sarcasm was heavy-handed, but effective. Adam, taken aback, could not find his voice. Jane, however, was more than equal to the occasion. "Before you go any further, colonel," she said, "I think that you should know that I am a qualified psychoanalyst, and that this man is my patient. I am in the midst of administering to him the corrective therapy which my diagnosis of his case suggested to me as being the one most likely to bring about his return to normalcy, and I will regard any interference on your part as a tort, and will institute appropriate legal proceedings at the earliest opportunity."

The colonel appraised her with sharp brown eyes. "I must say that I find your therapy rather interesting, doctor, encompassing as it does the abetting of the escape of a criminal. You are to be commended for your originality, though hardly for your professional ethics."

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Jane stiffened. "I'll have you know that my patient is not a criminal!"

"I'm afraid the state trooper at the gate in front of the Mephisto Products plant would disagree with you." The colonel turned toward Adam. "Prior to your appearance on the scene, he hadn't seen any of the Mephisto 'personnel' at close range, but when he did, he identified you instantly as the model for the male homunculi. We had already spotted this camp, and the tie-in between the two places was obvious, so it wasn't difficult for me to persuade my superiors that the best way to capture you would be by playing possum and waiting for you to show up. Do you have any idea of the dim view the United States Army takes of having its sacred traditions held up to ridicule?"

Adam could have sworn that he had seen that blunt smug face before, but where or when, he could not for the life of him recall. "No, I don't," he said, "and besides I didn't hold up anybody's traditions to ridicule. I've no more idea of how this camp got here than you have!"

Jane was looking at the colonel closely. "What made you think he would show up here?" she asked.

"It was a pretty safe bet. If a man visits two places that have a special significance to him, the odds have it that he'll visit a third." The colonel turned toward one of the M.P.'s. "Lock them up in the stockade and post a guard, corporal—we'll take them back to headquarters in the morning. First, though, search them. Go through those blankets and those bags he's carrying too."

TO Adam's surprise, Jane did not object. He was about to do so himself, but seeing her shake her head, he deferred to her better judgment. He was allowed to keep everything he had in his pockets after the colonel examined each item minutely, and as for Jane, she had no pockets, and she had left her purse in the car. The search completed, they were led outside by two of the M.P.'s, loaded into one of the jeeps, and driven twoard the outskirts of the camp. The other two M.P.'s followed in the remaining jeep.

The stockade proved to be a large one. It needed to be in order to accommodate all of the Adam Francis's that were imprisoned in it. The M.P.s deployed themselves to the three towers and the gate.

Jane took Adam's arm. "Let's go in one of the buildings so I can talk to you," she whispered.

He led the way across a small parade ground to the mess hall.

"Listen, Adam, I'm going to

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have to step up your therapy—there's no other way. The colonel wants you for himself, not the army. More specifically, he wants something he thinks you have in your head, now that he knows for certain that you don't have it on your person."

The touch of her golden hair upon his cheek had in no way straightened out Adam's thoughts. "How do you know?" he asked.

"He betrayed himself when he said that you had visited *two* places of special significance. We saw no mention of the university in any of the papers we bought, and we didn't hear a single word about it on the radio, so we can safely assume, in view of all the publicity the Mephisto Products plant has been getting, that the university hasn't been reported to the authorities. Therefore, in order for him to have known about it, he must have been apprised in some other way. Originally I thought that both the 'bird watcher' and his friend had followed us from the city, but I know now that only the 'bird watcher' did. The other man was already posted at the university, just as the 'bird watcher' had been posted at the Mephisto Products plant, and just as the colonel himself was posted here. After they got loose from my nylons, the 'bird watcher' and his friend probably notified him that we were on our way, and now he's probably waiting for them to show up. When they do show up, the colonel is going to send his four enlisted men back to headquarters on some pretext or other, and we're going to have company. I can't escape by myself, and the colonel knows it; but what he doesn't know is that you are sufficiently cured to effect both our escapes—if I prod you a little. So I'm going to prod you, Adam—and I warn you, it won't be pleasant."

"I can take it," Adam said.

"Good. Listen carefully now: You created this camp. You created the university. You created Mephisto Products, Incorporated. You painted them, Adam. You *painted* them!"

ABRUPT blackness smote him, and he began a vertiginous slide down a chute of nothingness. Around him, spheres and squares and rectangles gradually took shape and began to glow in reds and greens and yellows; in purples and violets and blues. The chute grew steeper, the descent swifter. Terrified, he reached out wildly and tried to grasp the sides, but there were no sides to grasp, and he only fell the faster. He opened his mouth and screamed a long and soundless scream, and the squares and rectangles scat-

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tered, and the spheres spun in color-riotous orbits round his head. Then, gradually, he became aware of a pressure upon his wrists, of a force being exerted in what seemed to be several directions at once. The force increased, and one by one the spheres and squares and rectangles went away, and the darkness of the mess hall settled round him once again.

Jane was leaning close to him, so close that her forehead touched his. He heard her voice: "You must trust me, Adam. Completely, implicitly." She released his wrists. "Now you are going back again, but this time you are going to go all the way through, and I am going with you. When we complete the para-passage, we will find ourselves in a large room looking down upon a painting of this camp. The only way I can enter this room is by accompanying you, since its para-dimensional field will respond to your three-plus pattern alone. The second you arrive there you will probably develop a splitting headache, so be prepared. You will go first, and I will follow. Ready?"

"But how?" Adam asked. "Where?"

"Through the doorway. See?—it's right there at your elbow."

He saw the vertical slot of blackness then, and it was right at his elbow, just as she had said. It had been there at his elbow all along, but somehow he had failed to perceive it. He slipped into it, consciously this time, and again blackness smote him, and again the vertiginous descent began. As before, spheres and squares and rectangles took shape, and pulsed in thrilling colors, and gradually he realized that they were a part of the chute . . . that they *were* the chute, and that he was sliding down them, no not down them, through them, no, not sliding, drifting; drifting gently down against a cobalt-blue swirl of nothingness, down, down into a surge of pink and purple, of mauve upturning, rising, flowing, spreading out for light years, ages, parsecs, eons. Growing bolder now, he glanced over his shoulder, and saw Jane drifting just behind him, drifting in multicolor, in variegation, in geometric panoply, golden hair flaring upward like a solar prominence, arms and shoulders glowing against the deep-blue background, green dress fluttering in a nonexistent breeze . . . Jane, just plain Jane. No, that wasn't right. Not 'plain'—'plane'. *Jane is a Plane Jane,* he thought giddily. *A Plane Jane is Jane.* And then, *Thy hand, thy touch, they comfort me* . . . and all the while he thought, he did not understand . . . Words, empty words; words without meaning,

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words out of a past he had put behind him, out of a reality he once had known, and had thrown away . . .

THE descent—if descent it was —ceased. The blue background faded, and one by one the spheres and squares and rectangles dissolved and disappeared. The room that took shape around him struck a resounding chord of *deja vu* on the keyboard of his memory, but he could not identify the concerto of which it was a part. To his right stood a familiar desk. On it sat a familiar coffee pot, and beside the coffee pot stood a familiar cup. Not far from where the desk stood, there was a dark stain on the metal floor, and several feet from the stain, a small object glittered in the bright light that rained down from three powerful ceiling lamps. Before him, a large painting rested on a makeshift easel. It was a painting of the camp.

His head began to throb, and raising his hand, he discovered a blood-caked wound on his forehead. Jane, who had emerged beside him, pulled his hand away and examined the wound herself. "It's not as serious as I feared," she said presently. "You're going to be all right, Adam."

He hardly heard her. He was too absorbed in the painting. It was astonishingly detailed, and astonishingly accurate. He could see the tiny figures of the various Adam Francis's throughout the camp. Indeed, if it hadn't been for the painting's relative smallness and its lack of depth, it could have been the camp itself, and even despite these two drawbacks, he caught himself searching for Jane and himself and the four M.P.'s. He did not find any of them, of course, because the painting wasn't really the camp, but the *original* of the camp.

Now how had he known that? he wondered.

He looked at the painting again. At its base, a relatively wide strip of canvas had been left blank, and a single wavy black line began at the bottom edge of the canvas and extended up to the "plant gate." Presently he identified the line as the "blacktop road" he had walked along the previous day on his way to the plant.

The throbbing of his head increased.

To the right of the painting, another painting rested upon another makeshift easel, and just beyond the second painting, still another painting rested upon a genuine easel. The second painting depicted the university, and the third, the Mephisto Products plant. Each was astonishingly detailed and accurate, and each was connected to the bottom

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edge of the canvas by a wavy black line.

"The micro-macro transdimensional projector is just behind you," Jane said.

TURNING, he saw the huge machine that pre-empted half of the room. Protruding from its dial-bedight panel were three lens units. They were approximately five feet apart and approximately eight feet above the level of the floor, and were focused on a painting apiece. A detailed image of the machine's complex interior flashed through his mind, and he knew suddenly that the machine was his brainchild, that he had supervised the machining of its parts, and that he had assembled it himself in this very room—this sanctum sanctorum which the company that had employed him had set aside for his exclusive use and attuned to his personal reactive pattern alone. However, the knowledge did not thrill him—it repelled him instead.

Jane was talking. She had been talking for some time now, but her words had not been getting through to him. "Adam," she said sharply, "pull yourself together and listen. There should be one more painting—a painting of the village of Greenview, the village where you were born and went to school. Do you have any idea where it might be?"

Miserably he shook his head. "Not the slightest."

"But you do remember there being such a place, don't you?"

"Oh yes. I can remember Greenview quite well. Much better than I can remember any of the—the other places. I can remember being in the army quite well too—up to—up to—" His thoughts went awry, and he paused. The throbbing of his head intensified. "Let's get out of here, Jane. My head's killing me."

"Poor Adam," she said. And then, "We'll go. But I want to make a few changes in the camp first. It will never do for us to go back and find it exactly the way we left it."

She went over to where a tall cupboard stood, opened it, found some paint, a small brush, and a bottle of transparent fluid. She squeezed a small amount of paint onto the brush, stepped over to the camp-painting, and painted five walls, one around each of the stockade towers, one around the stockade gate, and one around G * E * N * E * R * A * L * F * R * A * N * C * I * S *' mansion. Next, she wet her handkerchief from the contents of the bottle and wiped away a sizeable section of the stockade fence just to the left of the gate. Finally she put everything back, turned to Adam brightly. "Lead the way," she said.

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The slot of blackness was right at his elbow. Funny, how he had been unable to see it before. Perhaps you had to look a certain way. He slipped into it, and as he did so, his headache disappeared. Once again he found himself drifting down the chute that was not a chute, but a gently descending lane of spheres and squares and rectangles, a rainbow lane of flagstones and flowers. Turning his head, he saw Jane, and marveled at her flaming golden hair, and the spheroid flowers blooming all around her. This time, giddiness did not touch him, and his mind remained clear. *Paradimensional travel,* he thought. And then, *sidling.* Yes, that was it: sidling—sidling through the paraplane. There were two worlds, not one. Two universes. One was three-dimensional, the other, four, and aside from their dimensional difference and the slight variations which that difference gave rise to, they were identical.

The secret of who he was lay right at his fingertips. But he did not touch it.

He was afraid.

* * *

THEY emerged in the mess hall, not on the bench where they had been sitting, but near the door. "Apparently our counterparts were about to do a little exploring," Jane said. "Poor things. It must be awful suddenly to find yourself in a strange place and not have the remotest idea of how you got there." She picked up the thermos and one of the bags of sandwiches and they headed outside. Each of the three sentry towers now had a high pink wall around it, and a similar wall enclosed the stockade gate. From behind each came the sound of muffled shouts.

They disabled one of the jeeps by removing the distributor, commandeered the other and set out for the mansion, Adam at the wheel. The wall around G * E * N * E * R * A * L * F * R * A * N * C * I * S *' mansion was much higher than the other walls, and the colonel's shouts were barely audible.

Adam pulled up beside Jane's Chevrolet, and they got out. He was removing the distributor from the jeep when he saw the headlights of the approaching car. Jane saw them simultaneously. "Looks like I painted my walls too soon," she said. "That's our 'bird watcher' and his friend as sure as my name is Jane."

"We can always paint another one," Adam said, getting into the spirit of things. "See, they've stopped by that barracks there."

"Let's."

He preceded her through the

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dark doorway. "This time I'll be the artist."

RESOLUTELY ignoring the headache that beset him the instant he emerged from the paraplane, he chose a bright yellow and applied it artfully. Two new muffled voices were audible when they returned to the camp, and the new wall rose up like a chrome-yellow version of the Bastille. "It's rough on their counterparts," Jane said, climbing into the Chevrolet, "but it can't be helped."

For the second time he let her confusing use of the word "counterparts" go unchallenged. He kept seeing the golden-haired girl hanging against the cobalt cheek of the paranight. Getting behind the wheel, he asked, "Where to now?"

"Greenview—where else?"

Then: "Are you married, Jane?"

"No."

"Do your male patients ever fall in love with you?"

She started. "Sometimes. Why?"

"Because I have."

She took a deep breath. "I think we'd better be on our way, Adam."

Dutifully, he started up the motor. "I just told you I was in love with you," he said. "Don't I rate any reaction at all?"

She would not look at him. "You just told me you were in love with me as a patient. There's a difference, you see."

"But that's not what I meant at all. I—"

"It's the only thing you could have meant." She turned toward him then, and to his astonishment he saw that the verdant fields and foothills were glistening with dew. "You can't be in love with me any other way, Adam, because you're already in love. You're in love with the girl you used as a model for the university 'co-ed.'"

The sudden emptiness that pervaded him told him that what she had said was ture.

V

JANE saw the sign first. It stood at the intersection of two state highways, and it said, GREENVIEW, 61 MILES. "Well no wonder we couldn't find the fourth painting," she said. "There wasn't one. Greenview's on the level." She shook her head in bewilderment. "I didn't figure on anything like this at all."

Adam straightened up on the seat. "Maybe I'm going to turn out to be real after all," he said bitterly.

"Well, there's one possibility," she said. "You mentioned having a buddy while you were in the army. What was his name?"

"That's the funny part about

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it—his name was my name turned around. Francis Adam. It was our names that drew us together—that and the fact that we were both the same age, and both PFC's."

"When did he die?"

He stared at her in amazement. "How did you know he died?"

She ignored the question. "It was while you were still in the army, wasn't it?"

Adam nodded. "It was back in 'fifty-four. There was an accident on the firing range—one of those crazy things that aren't supposed to happen, but sometimes do. A ricochet." He shook his head. "I felt awful about it for a long time. We were pretty close. I think we knew almost as much about each other as we did about ourselves."

"I'm sure you did," Jane said. She pulled over onto the shoulder and stopped the car. "Take the wheel for the rest of the way, will you, Adam? I'm way overdue for a brown study."

She sat silently beside him as he drove over hills counterpaned with green grass and meadow flowers. Greenview stood on a green hillside overlooking a vista of fields and forests that was familiar and yet not familiar, and the highway wound down the gentle slope past a cemetery, a saw mill, and a shoe factory, and merged with the elm-lined main thoroughfare of the village proper. He looked this way and that for a remembered house or a remembered tree or a remembered blade of grass, and got nothing for his trouble but a feeling of sadness.

Presently houses and trees gave way to a sequence of false fronts and naked walks. At Jane's direction, he pulled up in front of a small restaurant whose glowing neon sign proclaimed it to be open. "Wait for me inside," she said. "There's something I have to find out for certain before we go any farther."

MISERABLY he entered the restaurant and ordered coffee. The building evoked no recognition. Neither did the waitress. There was something shadowy about all this. There was something shadowy about himself. Something unreal. No, he had never been to Greenview before, or, if he had, all memory of the experience had been wiped away.

But he had been *born* here, he reminded himself desperately. Before entering the army he had *lived* here. The operator's license he carried in his wallet *proved* that he had lived here. He got the wallet out of his pocket and looked at the license: *Adam Francis, 11 Sharon Drive, Greenview, NY.*

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A thought struck him, and he beckoned to the waitress. "How would I get to Sharon Drive from here?" he asked.

"Straight up the street, second turn to your left."

He wrote down the address on a paper napkin and handed the napkin to the waitress. "If a blonde in a green dress comes in here asking for me, tell her that that's where I've gone," he said, and laying a half dollar on the counter, he walked out.

The treeless interval of the business section gave way presently to stately elms and maples, and pleasant houses sitting well back from the walk shortly supplanted the sequence of tinselly false fronts. Sharon Drive carried on this happy residential scheme of things on a slightly less pretentious scale, and he found himself hoping desperately that the street really would turn out to be the background against which he had grown up, and that the American Colonial house, before which he presently paused, really would prove to be the house where he had been born.

Certainly there was something familiar about the house; but it was a vicarious familiarity—the sort of familiarity a person experiences when viewing an object or a scene that someone else has told him about. Bewildered, Adam started up the little shrub-bordered walk that led to the front door. He was astonished when a girl came running out to meet him. She had light-brown hair, hazel eyes, and a heart-shaped face, and she was wearing a blue dress. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him on the mouth. "Oh Adam, I knew you'd come back!" she cried. "I *knew* you would!"

Gasping, Adam stepped back. Anguish gripped him momentarily, and then tenderness took its place. He was in love with the girl—there was no doubt about that—and yet when he tried to think back to when he had known her, his thoughts froze in their tracks. He was able to identify her as the prototype of the Gaynor University "co-eds," but that was all. "Who —who are you?" he asked.

She took his arm solicitously. "Poor Adam," she sighed. "It's that awful blow you received on the head when you fell down the basement stairs. I knew that when you ran off with that blond hussy there was something wrong. I knew you'd never do such a thing if you were your normal self." She kissed his cheek. "Where is she now?"

Adam looked at her uncomprehendingly. Was it possible that she was referring to Jane? "I'm —I'm afraid I don't know what you mean," he said.

"She really has bewitched

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you, hasn't she. Hypnotized you, I'll bet. Well, no matter. I'll keep an eye out for her."

"But who *are* you?" he repeated.

"I'm Barbara Gaynor—don't you remember? Your fiancée. Come on, let's go inside. Your mother and father have been half out of their minds since you went away, and I've been staying here with them night and day. They'll be overjoyed to see you."

HE let her lead him up the verandah steps to the front door. There was a long, low car parked beside the house, he noticed. It rang no more bells, though, than the hall in which he presently found himself. "They're in the parlor, come on, we'll surprise them."

She maded him step into the room first. "Mom! Dad!" she called over his shoulder. "Look who's here!"

The woman reached Adam first. She was tall and buxom, and had dark-brown hair. Once upon a time her face had been heart-shaped, but now it had gone to fat. "Adam dearest," she said, kissing him on the cheek, "we're so glad you're back!"

The man was tall and rangy. His hairline had receded halfway to the back of his head, and he had beady hazel eyes. "Welcome home, son," he said.

Adam knew both of them from somewhere. Well, why not? They were his mother and his father, weren't they?

"I kept telling Barbara all along that you'd be back," his mother said. "I knew you'd come to your senses about that awful blond woman you ran off with."

Barbara nodded in agreement. "I knew that my fiancé would never give me up for someone like her. I knew he'd be back."

"Son," said his father, "Do you remember that projector you and I were working on in the basement-workshop before you went away? Well, you won't believe this, but that diagram for the patent application that you made is all wrong. Did you happen to make another one by any chance?"

Diagram . . . patent application . . . Adam raised his hand to his forehead. For a moment the dream he had described to Jane superseded reality, and he found himself sitting at the familiar table or workbench, looking down at the indecipherable blueprint. As always, he tried to turn his head to see who was sitting beside him, and, as always, his head would turn only just so far, and try as he would, he could turn it no farther. He tried and he tried, and sweat squeezed out on his forehead and rolled down into his eyes—

Suddenly he found himself sit-

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ting in another room—a much smaller room this time. Before him was another desk—a genuine desk. It was the same desk he had seen in the room where the three paintings stood. The paintings were not there now, though. This was before the paintings had come into being. On the desk before him was a sheet of paper with a diagram of some kind on it. The diagram seemed wrong somehow, and he leaned forward to see what the wrongness was. Suddenly there was a knock on the door—

ADAM swayed and would have fallen, had not his father caught his arm. "The second diagram," his father said. "Where is it?"

"I—I seem to recall drawing one—" Adam began.

"Yes?" said his father, leaning eagerly foward.

"Yes?" said his mother, breathing down the back of his neck.

"Yes?" said his fiancée, gazing raptly up into his eyes.

"—but I can't remember what I drew it on."

For a moment he thought he saw anger on the three faces hovering round him. "Think," said his father. "Think hard."

Desperate to please them, he concentrated with all his might. "I—I seem to recall a board of some kind," he said presently.

This time the anger on the three faces was unmistakable. "A board!" said his mother. "A board indeed." She swung on Barbara. "I told you we were wasting our time. I told you psychology wouldn't work. Just because you happened to hear the Plane Jane's analysis of his case, you think you're a Plane Jane too. Well, you're not! You have to gt to school to be a Plane Jane."

"Shut up!" Barbara said flatly. Then, to Adam, "You mustn't mind mother, darling. She's all shook up. Worrying about you has brought her to the verge of a nervous breakdown. Now, you said a board of some kind. What kind of a board? An ordinary one, or a special one?"

"A—a special one," Adam said. "It—it seems to me like it was black."

"Black!" gasped Barbara. Abruptly she faced his father and mother. "Don't you see?" she said. "It's the blackboard with the diagram on it that we saw when we posted George at the university. Why, it was there in plain sight all the time, and we never tumbled. Talk about your purloined letters!"

His mother's fat face glowed like a full moon coming out from behind a cloud. "That's it!" she said. "Come on you two."

His father hesitated. "What about him?" he asked.

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"Charlie and George and the colonel should be along any minute now. They'll take care of him —and the Plane Jane too."

"But we don't know what happened at the camp," his father objected. "Maybe they ran into trouble."

"With Ted in command?" Barbara flashed. "Not a chance. He can outsmart a Plane Jane any day! Come on."

They walked out of the room.

DAZED, Adam started to follow them. Someone who had been hiding in the hall stepped in front of him. Someone wearing a green sheath. Someone with golden hair and lupine-blue eyes. "No Adam," Jane said. "You stay with me."

He tried to edge past her. In vain. Outside, a car door slammed. Another. "But I have to go with them, Jane," he said. "Let me by. They're my mother and father. She's—she's my girl."

"And how did they explain me, pray?"

"You're—you're the blond hussy I ran away with. Who—who bewitched me. Who used me to gain her own evil ends." Outside, a motor started up, and there was the crunching sound of tires on gravel. "Let me by, Jane." he repeated. "Please!"

Compassion came into the lupine-blue eyes. "Poor Adam, they took you in all over again, didn't they. People like you are made to order for people like them." The compassion gave way to contempt. "They're no good, Adam. They're just no good, and she's the worst one of the lot!"

He was trembling. "Don't say such things, Jane. They believed in me. They made me real again. They're my people—I've got to go with them!"

She sighed. "It's too late now. But you can join them later on, if you still want to. Meanwhile I want to show you something."

Dejectedly he accompanied her out of the house and down the walk. They drove out of town and up the hill. When they came opposite the cemetery, she turned in at the gate. Presently she stopped the car and got out. "Brace yourself, Adam," she said. "This won't be pleasant."

He joined her and she led the way up a gentle green slope to where a lonely marker stood. She pointed to its weathered face. "Read what it says, Adam—and read the words the way they really are, not the way you want them to be. You've got to face the truth."

He bent forward. At first, the inscribed letters and numerals refused to align themselves intelligibly on his retina. When, at last, they did, they unleashed a wave of blackness that all but overcame him:

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Francis, Adam
B. Jan. 5, 1933
D. Feb. 9, 1954

Jane had moved closer to him. Now she touched his arm. "It was a cruel thing to do, but I had no choice," she said. "Can you remember now?"

"Yes," he said, "I can remember."

THE blackness was gone, put to rout by the penetrating radiance of memory regained. This time when he returned mentally to the workbench-desk, he found that he could turn his head without the slightest difficulty, and when he did so, the first person he saw was Barbara. Turning it still farther, he saw the man who had claimed to be his father but who was really Barbara's father, and the woman who had claimed to be his mother but who was really Barbara's mother. The man was operating a turret lathe and the woman was operating a drill press. Near them, their son George—Barbara's brother—was operating a surface grinder. At the opposite end of the room, the "bird watcher" was studying a set of blueprints with the colonel.

Barbara Gaynor. John and Elsa Gaynor. George Gaynor. Charlie Schell. Colonel Theodore Carter.

At first, there had been just Barbara, the secretary Christo Products, Inc. had assigned to him when they had given him the green light on his micro-macro transdimensional projector. Then, when the need for semi-skilled machinists had arisen, he had hired her brother George and her uncle Charlie, solely upon her recommendation. A little while later, also solely upon her recommendation, he had hired her mother and father. When Christo Products, Inc., outlined the projector's military possibilities to the Department of Defense, Colonel Theodore Carter was sent to the plant to serve porceedings, and the cast was complete.

Adam Francis, *nee* Francis Adam, raised his hand to his forehead where the bludgeon-slug wound should have been, but wasn't. He shuddered. Was remembering worthwhile?

Jane looked up into his face with gentle eyes, and answered his unspoken question. "Yes, Francis, it is. You must face the truth."

Resolutely, he faced it.

THE first part of the truth was the parallel universe that existed beyond the paraplane—the four-dimensional universe of which he was a part and from which he had withdrawn, naively believing as had innumerable withdrawal neurotics before him

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that a reality with only three dimensions would be less complicated, and therefore easier to cope with, than one with four. Inhabitants of the three-dimensional universe were blissfully unaware of the four-dimensional universe, and always would be, because, while it was possible to shed a dimension, it was impossible to acquire one, unless that dimension had been present originally. That was all sidling was, actually—losing one's fourth dimension on the way out, and regaining it on the way back in, with neither the loss nor the gain having the slightest effect on the person's perspective, owing to the relativity of flatness. The paraplane gave the process visual imagery, or perhaps the sidler himself supplied the imagery out of his own unconscious—no one knew for sure. The paraplane was pretty much of a mystery, and beyond the fact that it separated two parallel universes, not even the Plane Janes, who derived their nickname from it, knew very much about it.

Every person living in the four-dimensional universe had a counterpart living in the three-dimensional universe, and whenever the former sidled from Four to Three, he emerged wherever his counterpart happened to be, blended with him, and took him over completely. When sidling back to Four, he simply left his counterpart behind him and emerged in a locale in Four that corresponded to the one he had occupied in Three. In the event that the corresponding locale was inaccessible, it was necessary to choose a different departure point. Nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand, the counterpart was engaged in an occupation that was identical to the one the sidler was engaged in, and the exception to the rule arose only when the extra dimension endemic to Four brought about complications and/or developments inconsistent with Three. Thus, while Jane's counterpart was an ordinary psychoanalyst, she herself was a "paraplane psychoanalyst," since the only way to cope with the dimensional-withdrawal neurotics who constituted the majority of her cases was by following them through the paraplane to Three, and treating them and bringing them back to Four; and, while Francis Adam's counterpart worked for a parallel Christo Products company, he had not developed a parallel micro-macro transdimensional projector because his reality lacked a corresponding sub-dimensional universe into which anything could have been projected. Similarly, no one in Three had ever developed a parallel bludgeon pistol, because such a

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weapon would have been inoperable in only three dimensions.

THE second part of the truth was the micro-macro transdimensional projector itself. It could photograph a painting, enlarge it to any given size, and project it through the paraplane onto any predetermined site in the three-dimensional universe. An artist or a critic or a dilettante could then sidle to three, enter the painting as his counterpart, and examine it from a totally different perspective. Such a procedure was analogous to an inhabitant of Three shedding one dimension and entering a life-size two-dimensional materialization of, say, Van Gogh's "Landscape With Cypress Trees," and it was for the abetting of the study of the works of the grand masters that the projector had been invented and developed.

However, the purpose which a machine can be made to serve need have very little to do with the purpose which it was created to serve, and the projector was no exception. Hence, while it could be used to photograph, enlarge, and project paintings, it could also be used to photograph and project other things too. A person doing the projecting could sidle to Three, confiscate the materialization and bring it back to Four, where it would instantly acquire the dimensions of the original object. In other words, the projector could be made to *duplicate* four-dimensional objects, mainly money, and in the wrong hands could very well lead to the upsetting of the four-dimensional economic apple cart. It could be used, in short, to build an empire, and only an idealist such as Francis Adam could have been naive enough to have failed to grasp its possibilities. The fact that Christo Products, Inc. did not share his naïveté was borne out by the special room they had designed for him to build his brainchild in—a room so impregnable that, now that he was gone, they couldn't get into it themselves without resorting to methods that might damage the projector.

The third part of the truth was Barbara. Once again he looked into her eyes during the split-second before the bludgeon pistol coughed, and once again he saw the greed and the deceit and the selfishness; the contempt all opportunistic women like herself had for impractical idealists like him; the little affair she had been having with the colonel as an inducement to his joining her familial organization; the driving ambition and the utter disregard for everyone who stood in her way—all of these things he saw in all of their ugly nakedness just as he had seen them

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that other time, only this time, he did not reject them.

The fourth—and final—part of the truth was himself. Himself, unable to confront the reality of Barbara's trying to kill him, of her stealing the defective diagram and leaving him for dead; himself, regaining consciousness after she had left, rejecting his own reality and identifying with his army-buddy, Adam Francis. Himself, extrapolating Adam Francis' brief life with a series of *mise en scènes* designed in his semi-deranged state to throw his persecutors off his trail, and projecting them onto three-dimensional sites selected from the projector's inbuilt map, and then memorizing the location of those sites; *mise en scènes* that betrayed his unhappy childhood, his desperate need for affection and approval, his desire to punish himself; *mise en scènes* compounded of paint, self-pity, wish-fulfillment, oversubmissiveness, and megalomania. Himself, stuffing his pockets with all his available cash, then fleeing to Three and bending with this counterpart and setting himself up as Adam Francis. Himself, his phony past behind him, cowering in a hotel room, desperately trying to plug up the holes in his leaking reality with the straw of self-deception. Himself, rising to the bait and running to a Plane Jane and hiding behind her skirts like a frightened child—

VI

STANDING on the green hillside, looking down at the weathered marker, Francis Adam groaned. "The diagram," he said. "I drew it on one of the classroom blackboards when I was doing the university painting. They'll get it now. I told them about it."

Jane shook her head. "All they'll get is a headache. I scraped the diagram off the blackboard when I went back inside the building, and a few minutes ago I alerted the proper three-plus authorities as to the forthcoming appearance of three of your ex-employees on the scene. I also apprised those same authorities of the whereabouts of Uncle Charlie, Brother George, and the colonel. The counterparts of all six will be given false memory patterns to account for their actions over the past several days. So will the four M.P.'s who the colonel was forced to take with him for the sake of pretense when he talked his superiors into letting him stake out the camp. Shall we go?"

They descended the slope and climbed into the car. She circled back to the highway, and soon

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Greenview was far behind them. "When did you catch on that Barbara was behind the whole thing?" Francis Adam asked.

"At the army camp, when I tumbled to the fact that your 'bird watcher' didn't just happen to discover the Mephisto Products plant and didn't just happen to tie you in with it. The fact that the colonel was waiting for us at the camp proved that they must have known of the existence of the three projections all along, and the only way they could have known was by Barbara having told them, since she was the only one, outside of myself and a few trusted plant officials, who viewed the room on the main-office inter-department television screen the morning after you locked the door from the inside and disappeared. She wouldn't have had the opportunity, but it was Saturday and she happened to be the only secretary available, and one of the officials wanted someone to take down my tentative analysis of your case. I see now, though, that she didn't just *happen* to be available. After discovering that the diagram she had stolen was defective and after learning that you weren't quite as dead as you were supposed to be, she made it a *point* to be available."

He shuddered. "She must have monitored me on the main-office television screen after she took care of the night watchman, and then come aound and knocked on my door after I completed the first diagram."

"CORRECTION," Jane said. "After she *killed* the night watchman. Your girl friend is a rather cold-blooded individual, Francis. I suspected from the first that the robbery and the attempt on your life was an inside job because of the name you chose for your make-believe plant, and when you let drop your remark concerning the people you had been forced to work with, I was certain that it was. But I didn't tie in Barbara for the simple reason that I had been told that she was your fiancée, and quite naturally took it for granted that she was in love with you. As for the rest of your employees, none of them was present when I was called in, and even if they had been, I wouldn't have suspected them, because they were her relatives. Naturally I didn't suspect the colonel. I should have tumbled to the whole setup, though, from your reaction when I brought up the subject of girls. It was the reaction of a sorely disillusioned man. There's still one thing I don't understand, though. Seeing the three paintings and hearing my analysis of your case apprised Barbara of the sort of situation she was

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going to have to cope with if she wanted to get the corret diagram, but how did she know about Greenview,"

"I told her about Adam Francis lots of times," he answered, "And I must have mentioned his home town at least once. When she found out I'd taken Adam's name, she probably guessed what I was up to. The 'bird watcher' must have notified her after he followed me back to the hotel the night I checked out. I had a hunch someone was following me when I phoned you."

"She beat me to the punch on that one. *I* thought you had merely changed your name around. Lots of my patients play little tricks like that with their names—they think they're being cunning. Well anyway," she went on, "She didn't do poor Adam's parents in. Mr. and Mrs. Francis left Greenview some time ago, and the house was for rent. All Barbara had to do was to pay a month in advance, move in with her father and mother, and wait for you to come along in the event that you eluded the other two ambushes she'd set up for you."

"Tell me one thing," he said. "Why, after I went to such lengths to hide myself, did I take your bait and come running to you less than a week after I'd assume my new identity?"

She smiled. "Because your counterpart hadn't invented a projector, and consequently hadn't received a parallel head-injury. So when you sidled, and blended with him, your head-injury disappeared, and all that remained was your emotional shock. It wasn't quite strong enough to sustain your new reality, and you began to doubt. Your doubts resulted in your 'shadow-complex,' and you became frightened. I was only gambling, of course, when I planted my decoy in the hotel bar, but the gamble paid off. Incidentally," she went on, "locating you gave me no trouble at all. The psychological connection between the words 'Christo' and 'Mephisto' was obvious, and it wasn't difficult to figure out that in your new reality you would be playing the role of a disillusioned ex-employee and be living somewhere in the vicinity of your 'last place of employment' probably in a hotel room. The position of the locator dials on the projector panel told me where your 'last place of employment' was, and told Barbara too. But the 'Christo'-'Mephisto' connection escaped her."

HE looked wistfully at her profile. "Where are we going now?"

"Back to my office. I'm going to supply my counterpart with a memory pattern that will explain

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why she rented an other office in another city, and you're going to supply your counterpart with a memory-pattern that will explain what he's doing in that office, after which you and I are going to take our leave of them and sidle back to Four and get your head-injury taken care of."

His eyes did not leave her profile. Once again he was seeing the square and rectangular flagstones and the spheroid flowers of the paraplane, and the golden-haired girl hanging against the cobalt cheek of the paranight. She had been right when she told him that he had fallen in love with her as a patient, but that had been yesterday. Today he had fallen in love with her again.

"There's a little matter I'd like to discuss with you right now, and in considerable detail," he said.

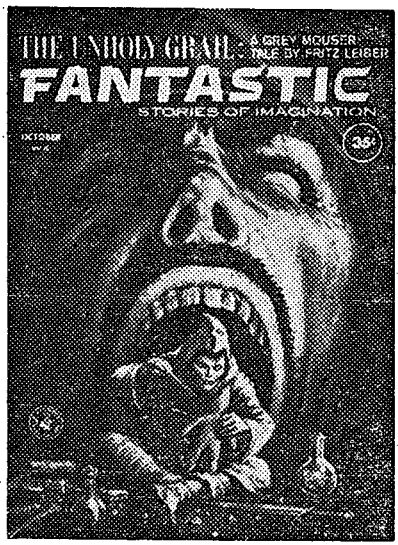
"As a Plane Jane"

"As just plain Jane."

She pulled over onto the shoulder. "Please begin," she said.

THE END

COMING NEXT MONTH



One of the great fantasy stories and one of the great—if not the greatest—fantasy cover illustrations of all time: that's the headline duo for the October FANTASTIC. The Story: *The Unholy Grail*, a tale in which **Fritz Leiber** takes you back to the very beginnings of The Grey Mouser's odyssey. The artwork: a scene from this tale, created by Emsh.

Other stories and features in the October issue will be drawn from a stockpile of goodies contributed by the likes of Ron Goulart, Jack Sharkey, Arthur Porges, and Bob Young.

So reserve your copy of the October FANTASTIC now. It will be on sale at your newsstand September 20.

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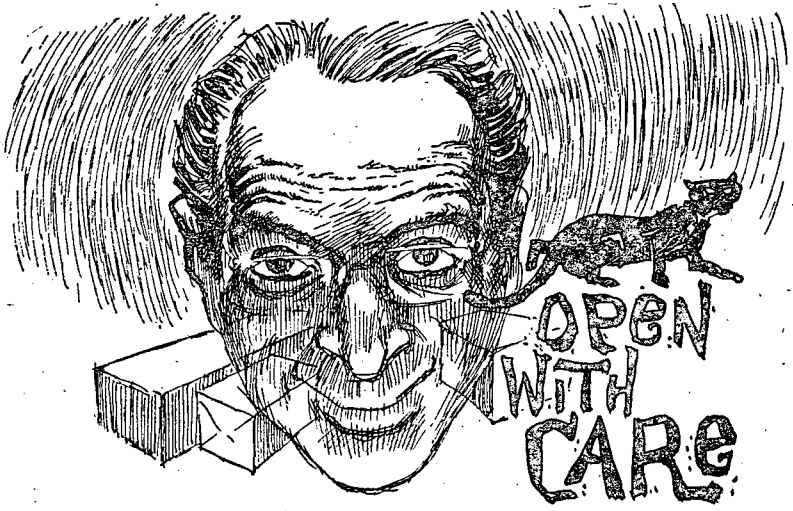
By BOYD CORRELL

Illustrator SUMMERS



What woman hasn't claimed to see through her husband for one reason or another? In the case of Emily Staub this was no idle boast.

EMILY STAUB peered closer at her husband. It seemed to her that he was becoming transparent. She could see the dancing flames of the fireplace through him, or at least through part of him.

Her husband, preoccupied with his own thoughts, was not even conscious of her presence. Since leaving the Commission, his mind was on his experiments to the exclusion of everything else, including his wife. His forced retirement had changed him.

Dr. Andrew Staub had participated in the first nuclear experiments when he was only twenty-seven. Because of his age, his genius was not publicized,

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public opinion being what it was at that time, the government feared to let the people know that such youth had a hand in the then awe-inspiring and fearful development.

Of course, when World War III came along in 1965, Dr. Staub had reached the more mature age of forty-seven. He was duly recognized and acclaimed for his discovery of control of the mutational effects of the progeny of human beings exposed to radioactive blasts. In fact the Commission—though never the Army, Navy, or Air Force—gave direct credit to him for winning World War III. The enemy, their intelligence having ferreted out the fact that we could control the physical and mental make-up of their next generations, decided to throw in the towel. Even the ambitious, live-for-the-moment generals, could not face the prospects of their children or grandchildren making their earthly debut in the shape of jelly fish with the mentalities of uni-valves.

Dr. Staub was not especially impressed by this outstanding achievement. His main interest was in isotopes. He had a theory, and his war-time accomplishment was merely a primary step towards its perfection. He called this project his Great Experiment and revealed it to no one. It was based on the fact that isotopes are almost identical with the original element.

So for two more decades Dr. Staub raced into new discoveries which pleased the Commission greatly until he let drop to a colleague that he was nearing the key to mutation of *the present* generation by the use of isotopes made from certain fissionable elements and properly applied to a fellow human being.

This information, reaching the Top, quickly called for a secret meeting for consideration of when the course of certain things should be brought to a halt. The prospects of Staub's latest enterprise had about the same frightening effect on them as his earlier one had had on the enemy during World War III. It was hastily decided to retire the Commission's greatest scientist.

SO Dr. Staub was put to pasture with proper decorations, a staggeringly generous pension, an ultimatum that he was not to experiment on his fellow human beings, and a thinly veiled suggestion that he turn his efforts towards horticulture or the raising of turkeys. Dr. Staub did not care for the suggestion, accepted the pension, bowed to the ultimatum, and proceeded to build himself a laboratory on his country estate where he could do as he pleased. It was not

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necessary for him to continue on the mutation of the present generation project because, during this research, he had learned what he needed to further his progress toward the Great Experiment.

But this story is about Emily Staub, the doctor's wife. Emily was thirty years younger than her husband and, because his was strictly a scientific mind which never entered the realm of society and very seldom that of domestic biology, lived a rather sad and lonely life.

Eighty now, and a complete recluse, Staub spent practically all his waking hours in the laboratory. When he did come into his home fairly early in the evening he usually went directly to his study at the rear of the house—a room forbidden to Emily except to clean; he not trusting any servants within this ivory tower of his.

For the past few years, being so completely absorbed in his Great Experiment, he had rarely spoken to his wife except at mealtime when, for instance, he could not reach the salt.

Emily, long resigned to this strange man whose mind was so full of scientific formulae that to break through his continuous concentration was next to impossible, turned her thoughts inward for contemplation very much as certain Tibetans allegedly stare at their navels. She actually sought desperately for some ailment on which she might concentrate and find diversion. And also, perhaps if she suffered an illness it might throw some of her husband's thoughts toward her.

But she was remarkably healthy for a woman of fifty. Not even a skip in her heartbeat which could give her an excuse for checking her pulse during his presence. Nor could she discover any aches, pains, or even nerve twinges to think about and wonder if they were indicative of more serious affliction elsewhere within her system. As a hypochondriac she was a failure until Dr. Staub began bringing home the packages.

HE brought home one a week; where from, she did not know, but they must have been from his laboratory for that was his world from which he never wandered. The packages were never the same sizes, and they were wrapped in heavy brown paper. Staub would go straight to his study with these and there he would leave them. A day or so later they would disappear. Although Emily knew quite well that she was to touch nothing in the sacred study, Staub broke his usual silence long enough to warn her, when he brought in the first one, that

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they were not to be moved, lifted, or even dusted. He seemed strangely excited.

This almost unprecedented bow of words touched Emily deeply and her eyes clouded momentarily from sheer joy. It was then that she discovered, or thought she discovered, something peculiar about her sight. She wiped away the tears quickly and blinked but still there seemed a cloudy vision. It was when her husband walked between her and the open fireplace that she noticed the apparent illusion—she could see through his left foot!

She heard herself giggle, and was startled by the rather idiotic sound. It must have been provoked by sub-conscious happiness at finding something wrong with herself, something which might give her time-consuming thought during the long days.

At dinner Staub's feet were concealed beneath the table so Emily concentrated her efforts to prove that perhaps she was going blind by squinting sharply at objects in the room, closing one eye and then the other until anyone more perceptive than Staub would have noticed and concluded the poor woman was either afflicted with a nervous tic or had become addicted to narcotics.

But Emily now was happy. That night she lay in bed with her bedside light on and stared at the ceiling and the chairs and the curtains so intently that at last she felt a dull pain in the back of her head which proved conclusively, to her, that some disease was attacking her eyes. For a physicist's wife she sadly lacked scientific or medical knowledge and the only malady she knew of which effected sight was glaucoma. She remembered, as a small girl, her mother telling her about an aunt who had glaucoma. The first noticeable manifestation, she recalled, was that the eye-balls become hard.

Tentatively, Emily pushed on the closed lid of one eye. It did feel hard, giving very little to the pressure, and she tried the other eye. Both seemed to possess the same lack of elasticity. Emily opened her eyes and the room was a blur for a few moments. A bad sign, she was sure. She wished she had someone with whom she could compare the hardness of her eyes. Her husband was in his study, but she did not dare disturb him. She thought of the cat, and slipped out of bed and into the sitting room.

POLYGAMOUS sat before the dying fire sleeping softly, a gentle purr ruffling his throat. He was really Dr. Staub's cat, spending more time at the labo-

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ratory than at home. Emily approached him gently. With one finger she pressed against her own eye for comparison, then reached down and pushed against one of Polygamous's closed eyes. Polygamous came awake with a start and backed off indignantly from the probing finger. He almost backed into the fire until he became oriented and that was when Emily noticed that she appeared to see through *him.*

That settled it. Something was definitely wrong. Excitedly hugging her now proven ailment to her bosom, Emily went back into her bedroom, not seeing her husband standing in the shadows of the hallway observing her thoughtfully between narrowing eyes. When she closed her door he gathered up Polygamous and carried him to his study.

Emily slept and was neither conscious of, nor disturbed by, the dull thudding of a pick digging in the garden behind the house.

As the weeks passed Emily became more and more absorbed in her condition, but the novelty and diversion it gave her were now changing to concern. Though she would not at first admit it, she was becoming somewhat frightened. Pushing against her eyes periodically throughout the day to check their hardness naturally developed a functional disorder, and half the time she was either seeing double or conscious of different colored light-rings around objects. And along with these phenomena her husband's anatomy apparently became more and more transparent.

Starting with the left foot, this transparency spread to the right, and then up both legs. At the end of seven weeks she was somewhat shaken to note that, with the exception of Dr. Staub's head, she could see completely through him when he passed between her and a strong light and, more disconcerting still, he would practically disappear from sight when he sat in a darkened part of the room.

Emily went to an oculist.

In his examination room she described her symptoms. The doctor raised an eyebrow.

"You actually see through your husband?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes," said Emily. "And the cat, too—" With a start she realized that she had not seen Polygamous since the night she attempted to check her eyes with his.

"H-m-m-m," said the Doctor. He turned on a bright light and stood in front of it. "Do you—ah—see through me, Mrs. Staub?"

Emily stared hard at the oculist, trying to shake off a chill which had suddenly possessed her. "No," she said. "No. But

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there seems to be a double outline around you—as though you were standing in two different places."

"I see," said the Doctor. "Ah—how far apart am I?"

"Oh, just a fraction of an inch. More like a wavery line around a light through a foggy window."

HE pushed back her head and examined her eyes closely, a pencil of light from an instrument on his forehead blinding her.

"Do you rub your eyes much, Mrs. Staub?"

"Rub? No. That is, I have been pushing against them with my fingers, checking them for hardness."

"Often?"

"Oh, yes. All through the day," said Emily. "Would that cause things to seem transparent?"

"No," said the Doctor firmly. "But it would cause distortion." He wiggled a finger about even with her ear and some inches from her head. "Do you see that?" he asked.

Emily nodded. "You're wiggling your fingers."

"You haven't got glaucoma. It starts by effecting side-vision, and yours is perfect. I'd suggest you stop worry and also stop pushing your eyes . . ." He looked at her shrewdly. "And I would like to see Dr. Staub."

"Oh, he doesn't see anybody," said Emily. "Not since he left the Commission."

"He has no assistants in his laboratory?"

"No. We don't even have servants in the house. My husband doesn't trust them."

The oculist decided that he wanted to be done with the Staubs. He was no psychiatrist. He escorted Emily to the door, repeated his advice against worry and rubbing, and bowed her out. When she was gone he went to a shelf and took down a *Who's Who* and looked up "Staub, Andrew—nuclear scientist" and discovered he had been retired from Government work in 1991.

"A good thing," thought the Doctor. He poured himself a drink.

IT was after midnight of Saturday, the end of the eighth week since the first package was brought in by Dr. Staub. A touch of joy had been brought into her life a few weeks ago on her birthday. She had found on the breakfast table a velvet jeweler's box in which were an exquisite pair of diamond earrings and a matching pendant. Beneath the box was a card on which Dr. Staub had written "A Happy Birthday—Andrew."

Emily had cried a little and had put on the jewelry and never taken it off. On very depressing

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days she would touch her ears and fondle the pendant around her neck. She was fondling the pendant this Saturday night in bed as she lay there, unable to sleep. She had not seen her husband since her visit to the oculist, though there were signs each morning that he had come into the house, apparently leaving before she awoke.

Tonight she was determined to make sure her ailment was imaginary. Her hand reached from the pendant to push against an eye, but she jerked it down. The oculist had convinced her that this constant irritation had caused her blurred vision. Since she had stopped this habit things seemed normal again: nothing appeared transparent which shouldn't be transparent. If only she could catch a glimpse of Polygamous or the doctor it would prove . . .

She heard the front door open and she quickly slipped out of bed and went to the door of her room and peered through the slight opening she had left into the living room. The light in the far corner was the only one burning—she always left it for her husband's convenience and he would turn it out on retiring. That was one of the definite signs that he had been coming home nights: the light was always off in the morning.

As she looked through the crack, a wispy blur swept past—a blur so slight and intangible that she was not at all sure there had been one. But watching, she saw the outline of her husband going towards the light. And now he was completely transparent, his figure, except for his head, disappearing entirely for a moment as he walked around the lamp. In his hand he carried the eighth package; a square parcel wrapped in brown paper. It seemed to float through the air, then all movement vanished and blackness took over as the light snapped off. Soft footsteps sounded across the floor and towards the study.

Emily crept back into bed, bewildered, and with an odd weakness. She could not sleep and was up earlier than usual the next morning. She knew Dr. Staub had not left because she would have heard the door open and close. And, lying awake, she had half convinced herself that the shadows of night had merely caused another illusion; the oculist had been *so* convincing.

She waited patiently but Staub did not come from his study.

AT eleven thirty she bravely walked to his quarters: a bedroom and dressing room connected with the study. She peered into the bedroom and at the bed, but the blinds were closed and the room almost in

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darkness. She allowed her eyes to become accustomed to the gloom and studied the bed. She could see no one there yet there was an indentation the shape of a human's body, and the bedclothes were strangely piled up as though covering a figure. The head of the figure could easily be hidden by a large, pushed-aside pillow.

The odd weakness, accompanied by fear, rose in her again and she felt panic. She turned and went swiftly through the back door and into her garden. She hadn't been in the garden for many days.

A hundred feet from the study window, shaded by a live oak tree, was a bed of tuberous begonias and to her dismay a mongrel dog was digging furiously in the center of it. For a moment she forgot her fear and shouted at the dog who stopped his digging and ran.

Emily approached to see the extent of damage to her flowers when she saw, at the bottom of the hole, a mass of fur, and less exposed, a smaller mass. She probed the exposed fur with a stick and disclosed the body of Polygamous. A nauseating odor assailed her nostrils and swept away her first feeling of pity for the cat as well as concern for Dr. Staub who was so fond of Polygamous. Ill, she started back into the house when she noticed seven empty cartons and balled wads of brown paper shoved deep into the huge wood-box by the door. The paper was of the same type which covered the packages. Had Dr. Staub accidentally killed the cat and brought it home in a carton and then buried it? Then what had been in the other packages? Other animals? Dead animals her husband may have destroyed in experiments and also buried? She remembered the odd sizes—one box had been especially large, large enough to contain a shepherd dog.

For a long time she sat in the living room, watching the door to her husband's suite. She had left it slightly ajar when she made her hasty exit and through this opening she could see the foot of his bed. In the dimness of the room she thought she saw a light movement there, but it was so quick she could not be sure. Then, only moments later, something soft pressed against her leg. She managed not to scream and looked down.

Very faintly the outline of Polygamous brushed against the chair, glided to the fireplace.

EMILY closed her eyes against a darkness which pushed around her. The darkness passed and an irresistible force drew her to the partly opened door. She had to see what was in the eighth package.

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She crept past the disordered bed and into the study and up to the library table. On it was the square parcel she had seen the night before, and over it she could see into the bedroom.

She reached for the box, still watching the bed. She unfolded the brown paper, trying to hush the rustling noise. The carton inside was of considerable weight and thumped as she turned it over.

There was violent movement in the bed. The covers were thrown back and the window shade lifted. Against the light she clearly saw Dr. Staub's head as he rose to glare at her.

Then his glare turned to a monstrous grin of victory. He leapt to his feet in the bed and bounced like a school boy except that his head was like a pumpkin on a string with no body to support it.

In a hoarse whisper that was like a shout he said to the ceiling:

"It works; It works! the pendant properly applied the isotopes! The whole body can live!"

His dangling head, his insane grin, the bed responding in jerks to no visible force was too terrifying for Emily to watch and she dropped her gaze to the box her fingers had automatically opened.

Inside the box was her own head.

THE END

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APRIL IN PARIS

By URSULA K. LeGUIN

Illustrator SUMMERS

The standard price for invoking the black arts suffers a major set-back in this sensitive tale.

PROFESSOR Barry Pennywither sat in a cold, shadowy garret and stared at the table in front of him, on which lay a book and a breadcrust. The bread had been his dinner, the book had been his lifework. Both were dry. Dr. Pennywither sighed, and then shivered. Though the lower-floor apartments of the old house were quite elegant, the heat was turned off on April 1st, come what may; it was now April 2nd, and sleeting. If Dr. Pennywither raised his head a little he could see from his window the two square towers of Notre Dame de Paris, vague and soaring in the dusk, almost near enough to touch: for the Island of St. Louis, where he lived, is like a little barge being towed downstream behind the Island of the City, where Notre Dame stands. But he did not raise his head. He was too cold.

The great towers sank into darkness. Dr. Pennywither sank into gloom. He stared with loath-

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ing at his book. It had won him a year in Paris—publish or perish, said the Dean of Faculties, and he had published, and been rewarded with a year's leave from teaching, without pay. Munson College could not afford to pay unteaching teachers. So on his scraped-up savings he had come back to Paris, to live again as a student in a garret, to read fifteenth-century manuscripts at the Library, to see the chestnuts flower along the avenues. But it hadn't worked. He was forty, too old for lonely garrets. The sleet would blight the budding chestnut flowers. And he was sick of his work. Who cared about his theory, the Pennywither Theory, concerning the mysterious disappearance of the poet François Villon in 1463? Nobody. For after all his Theory about poor Villon, the greatest juvenile delinquent of all time, was only a theory and could never be proved, not across the gulf of five hundred years. Nothing could be proved. And besides, what did it matter if Villon died on Montfaucon gallows or (as Pennywither thought) in a Lyons brothel on the way to Italy? Nobody cared. Nobody else loved Villon enough. Nobody loved Dr. Pennywither, either; not even Dr. Pennywither. Why should he? An unsocial, unmarried, underpaid pedant, sitting alone in an unheated attic in an unrestored tenement trying to write another unreadable book. "I'm unrealistic," he said aloud with another sigh and another shiver. He got up and took the blanket off his bed, wrapped himself in it, sat down thus bundled at the table, and tried to light a Gauloise Bleue. His lighter snapped vainly. He sighed once more, got up, fetched a can of vile-smelling French lighter fluid, sat down, rewrapped his cocoon, filled the lighter, and snapped it. The fluid had spilled around a good bit. The lighter lit, so did Dr. Pennywither, from the wrists down. "Oh hell!" he cried, blue flames leaping from his knuckles, and jumped up batting his arms wildly, shouting "Hell!" and raging against Destiny. Nothing ever went right. What was the use? It was then 8:12 on the night of April 2nd, 1961.

* * *

A MAN sat hunched at a table in a cold, high room. Through the window behind him the two square towers of Notre Dame cathedral loomed in the Spring dusk. In front of him on the table lay a hunk of cheese and a huge, iron-latched, handwritten book. The book was called (in Latin) *On the Primacy of the Element Fire over the Other Three Elements*. Its au-

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thor stared at it with loathing. Nearby on a small iron stove a small alembic simmered. Jehan Lenoir mechanically inched his chair nearer the stove now and then, for warmth, but his thoughts were on deeper problems. "Hell!" he said finally (in Late Mediaeval French), slammed the book shut, and got up. What if his theory was wrong? What if water were the primal element? How could you prove these things? There must be some way—some method—so that one could be sure, absolutely sure, of one single fact! But each fact led into others, a monstrous tangle, and the Authorities conflicted, and anyway no one would read his book, not even the wretched pedants at the Sorbonne. They smelled heresy. What was the use? What good this life spent in poverty and alone, when he had learned nothing, merely guessed and theorized? He strode about the garret, raging, and then stood still. "All right!" he said to Destiny. "Very good! You've given me nothing, so I'll take what I want!" He went to one of the stacks of books that covered most of the floor-space, yanked out a bottom volume (scarring the leather and bruising his knuckles when the overlying folios avalanched), slapped it on the table and began to study one page of it. Then, still with a set cold look of rebellion, he got things ready: sulfur, silver, chalk . . . Though the room was dusty and littered, his little workbench was neatly and handily arranged. He was soon ready. Then he paused. "This is ridiculous," he muttered, glancing out the window into the darkness where now one could only guess at the two square towers. A watchman passed below calling out the hour, eight o'clock of a cold clear night. It was so still he could hear the lapping of the Seine. He shrugged, frowned, took up the chalk and drew a neat pentagram on the floor near his table, then took up the book and began to read in a clear but self-conscious voice: "Haere, haere, audi me . . ." It was a long spell, and mostly nonsense. His voice sank. He was bored and embarrassed. He hurried through the last words, shut the book, and then fell backwards against the door, gap-mouthed, staring at the enormous, shapeless figure that stood within the pentagram, lit only by the blue flicker of its waving, fiery claws.

BARRY PENNYWITHER finally got control of himself and put out the fire by burying his hands in the folds of the blanket wrapped around him. Unburned but upset, he sat down again. He looked at his

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book. Then he stared at it. It was no longer thin and grey and titled *The Last Years of Villon: an Investigation of Possibilities.* It was thick and brown and titled *Incantatoria Magna.* On his table? A priceless manuscript dating from 1407 of which the only extant undamaged copy was in the Ambrosian Library in Milan? He looked slowly around. His mouth dropped slowly open. He observed a stove, a chemist's workbench, two or three dozen heaps of unbelievable leather-bound books, the window, the door. His window, his door. But crouching against his door was a little creature, black and shapeless, from which came a dry rattling sound.

Barry Pennywither was not a very brave man, but he was rational. He thought he had lost his mind, and so he said quite steadily, "Are you the Devil?"

The creature shuddered and rattled.

Experimentally, with a glance at invisible Notre Dame, the professor made the sign of the Cross.

At this the creature twitched; not a flinch, a twitch. Then it said something, feebly, but in perfectly good English—no, in perfectly good French—no, in rather odd French: "Mais vous estes de Dieu," it said.

Barry got up and peered at it. "Who are you?" he demanded, and it lifted up a quite human face and answered meekly, "Jehan Lenoir."

"What are you doing in my room?"

There was a pause. Lenoir got up from his knees and stood straight, all five foot two of him. "This is *my* room," he said at last, though very politely.

Barry looked around at the books and alembics. There was another pause. "Then how did I get here?"

"I brought you."

"Are you a doctor?"

Lenoir nodded, with pride. His whole air had changed. "Yes, I'm a doctor," he said. "Yes, I brought you here. If Nature will yield me no knowledge, then I can conquer Nature herself, I can work a miracle! To the devil with science, then. I was a scientist—" he glared at Barry. "No longer. They call me a fool, a heretic, well by God I'm worse. I'm a sorcerer, a black magician, Jehan the Black! Magic works, does it? The science is a waste of time. Ha!" he said, but he did not really look triumphant. "I wish it hadn't worked," he said more quietly, pacing up and down between folios.

"So do I," said his guest.

"Who are you?" Lenoir looked up challengingly at Barry, though there was nearly a foot difference in their heights.

"Barry A. Pennywither. I'm a

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professor of French at Munson College, Indiana, on leave in Paris to pursue my studies of Late Mediaeval Fr—" He stopped. He had just realized what kind of accent Lenoir had. "What year is this? What century? Please, Dr. Lenoir—" The Frenchman looked confused. The meanings of words change, as well as their pronunciations. "Who rules this country?" Barry shouted.

Lenoir gave a shrug, a French shrug (some things never change.) "Louis is king," he said. "Louis the Eleventh. The dirty old spider."

THEY stood staring at each other like wooden Indians for some time. Lenoir spoke first. "Then you're a man?"

"Yes. Look, Lenoir, I think you —your spell—you must have muffed it a bit."

"Evidently," said the alchemist. "Are you French?"

"No."

"Are you English?" Lenoir glared. "Are you a filthy Goddam?"

"No. No. I'm from America. I'm from the—from your future. From the twentieth century A.D." Barry blushed. It sounded silly, and he was a modest man. But he knew this was no illusion. The room he stood in, his room, was new. Not five centuries old. Unswept, but new. And the copy of Albertus Magnus by his knee was new, bound in soft supple calfskin, the gold lettering gleaming. And there stood Lenoir in his black gown, not in costume, at home . . .

"Please sit down, sir," Lenoir was saying. And he added, with the fine though absent courtesy of the poor scholar, "Are you tired from the journey? I have bread and cheese, if you'll honor me by sharing it."

They sat at the table munching bread and cheese. At first Lenoir tried to explain why he had tried black magic. "I was fed up," he said. "Fed up! I've slaved in solitude since I was twenty, for what? For knowledge. To learn some of Nature's secrets. They are not to be learned." He drove his knife half an inch into the table, and Barry jumped. Lenoir was a thin little fellow, but evidently a passionate one. It was a fine face, though pale and lean: intelligent, alert, vivid. Barry was reminded of the face of a famous atomic physicist, seen in newspaper pictures up until 1953. Somehow this likeness prompted him to say, "Some are, Lenoir; we've learned a good bit, here and there . . ."

"What?" said the alchemist, skeptical but curious.

"Well, I'm no scientist—"

"Can you make gold?"

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"No, I don't think so, but they do make diamonds."

"How?"

"Carbon—coal, you know—under great heat and pressure, I believe. Coal and diamond are both carbon, you know, the same element."

"Element?"

"Now as I say, I'm no—"

"Which is the primal element?" Lenoir shouted, his eyes fiery, the knife poised in his hand.

"There are about a hundred elements," Barry said coldly, hiding his alarm.

TWO hours later, having squeezed out of Barry every dribble of the remnants of his college Chemistry course, Lenoir rushed out into the night and reappeared shortly with a bottle. "O my master," he cried, "to think I offered you only bread and cheese!" It was a pleasant burgundy, vintage 1477, a good year. After they had drunk a glass together Lenoir said, "If somehow I could repay you . . ."

"You can. Do you know the name of the poet François Villon?"

"Yes," Lenoir said with some surprise, "but he wrote only French trash, you know, not in Latin."

"Do you know how or when he died?"

"Oh, yes; hanged at Montfaucon here in '64 or '65, with a crew of no-goods like himself. Why?"

Two hours later the bottle was dry, their throats were dry, and the watchman had called three o'clock of a cold clear morning.

"Jehan, I'm worn out," Barry said, "you'd better send me back." The alchemist was too polite, too grateful, and perhaps also too tired to argue. Barry stood stiffly inside the pentagram, a tall bony figure muffled in a brown blanket, smoking a Gauloise Bleue. "Adieu," Lenoir said sadly. "Au revoir," Barry replied.

Lenoir began to read the spell backwards. The candle flickered, his voice softened. "Me audi, haere, haere," he read, sighed, and looked up. The pentagram was empty. The candle flickered. "But I learned so little!" Lenoir cried out to the empty room. Then he beat the open book with his fists and said, "And a friend like that—a real friend—"

He smoked one of the cigarettes Barry had left him—he had taken to tobacco at once. He slept, sitting at his table, for a couple of hours. When he woke he brooded a while, relit his candle, smoked the other cigarette, then opened the *Icantatoria* and began to read aloud: "Haere, haere . . ."

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OH, thank God," Barry said, stepping quickly out of the pentagram and grasping Lenoir's hand. "Listen, I got back there—this room, this same room, Jehan! but old, horribly old, and empty, you weren't there—I thought, my God, what have I done? I'd sell my soul to get back there, to him—What can I do with what I've learned? Who'll believe it? How can I prove it? And who the devil could I tell it to anyhow, who cares? I couldn't sleep, I sat and cried for an hour hoping, praying that you would—"

"Will you stay?"

"Yes. Look, I brought these—in case you did invoke me." Sheepishly he exhibited eight packs of Gauloises, several books, and a gold watch. "It might fetch a price," he explained, "I know paper francs wouldn't do much good."

At sight of the printed books Lenoir's eyes gleamed with curiosity, but he stood still. "My friend," he said, "You said you'd sell your soul . . . you know . . . So would I. Yet we haven't. How—after all—how did this happen? That we're both men. No devils. No pacts in blood. Two men who've lived in this room . . ."

"I don't know," said Barry. "We'll think that out later. Can I stay with you, Jehan?"

"Consider this your home," Lenoir said with a gracious gesture around the room, the stacks of books, the alembics, the candle growing pale. Outside the window, grey on grey, rose up the two great towers of Notre Dame. It was the dawn of April 3rd.

After breakfast (breadcrusts and cheese-rinds) they went out and climbed the south tower. The cathedral looked the same as always, though cleaner than in 1961, but the view was rather a shock to Barry. He looked down upon a little town. Two small islands covered with houses; on the right bank more houses crowded inside a fortified wall; on the left bank a few streets twisting around the college; and that was all. Pigeons chortled on the sunwarmed stone between gargoyles. Lenoir, who had seen the view before, was carving the date (in Roman numerals) on a parapet. "Let's celebrate," he said. "Let's go out into the country. I haven't been out of the city for two years. Let's go clear over there—" he pointed to a misty green hill on which a few huts and a windmill were just visible—"to Montmartre, eh? There are some good bars there, I'm told."

THEIR life soon settled into an easy routine. At first Barry was a little nervous in the crowded streets, but, in a spare

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black gown of Lenoir's, he was not noticed as outlandish except for his height. He was probably the tallest man in fifteenth-century France. Living standards were low and lice were unavoidable, but Barry had never valued comfort much; the only thing he really missed was coffee at breakfast. When they had bought a bed and a razor—Barry had forgotten his—and introduced him to the landlord as M. Barrie, a cousin of Lenoir's from the Auvergne, their housekeeping arrangements were complete. Barry's watch brought a tremendous price, four gold pieces, enough to live on for a year. They sold it as a wondrous new timepiece from Illyria, and the buyer, a Court chamberlain looking for a nice present to give the king, looked at the inscription—Hamilton Bros., New Haven, 1881—and nodded sagely. Unfortunately, he was shut up in one of King Louis' cages for naughty courtiers at Tours before he had presented his gift, and the watch may still be there behind some brick in the ruins of Plessis; but this did not affect the two scholars. Mornings they wandered about sightseeing the Bastille and the churches, or visiting various minor poets in whom Barry was interested; after lunch they discussed electricity, the atomic theory, physiology, and other matters in which Lenoir was interested, and performed minor chemical and anatomical experiments, usually unsuccessfully; after supper they merely talked. Endless, easy talks that ranged over the centuries but always ended here, in the shadowy room with its window open to the Spring night, in their friendship. After two weeks they might have known each other all their lives. They were perfectly happy. They knew they would do nothing with what they had learned from each other. In 1961 how could Barry ever prove his knowledge of old Paris, in 1482 how could Lenoir ever prove the validity of the Scientific Method? It did not bother them. They had never really expected to be listened to. They had merely wanted to learn.

So they were happy for the first time in their lives; so happy, in fact, that certain desires, always before subjugated to the desire for knowledge, began to awaken. "I don't suppose," Barry said one night across the table, "that you ever thought much about marrying?"

"Well, no," his friend answered, doubtfully. "That is, I'm in minor orders . . . and it seemed irrelevant . . ."

"And expensive. Besides, in my time, no self-respecting woman would want to share my kind of life. American women are so

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damned poised and efficient and glamorous, terrifying creatures . . ."

"And women here are little, and dark, like beetles, with bad teeth," Lenoir said morosely.

They said no more about women that night. But the next night they did; and the next; and on the next, celebrating the successful dissection of the main nervous system of a pregnant frog, they drank two bottles of Montrachet '74 and got soused. "Lets invoke a woman, Jehan," Barry said in a lascivious bass, grinning like a gargoyle.

"What if I raised a devil this time?"

"Is there really much difference?"

THEY laughed wildly, and drew a pentagram. "Haere, haere," Lenoir began; when he got the hiccups, Barry took over. He read the last words. There was a rush of cold, marshy-smelling air, and in the pentagram stood a wild-eyed being with long black hair, stark naked, screaming.

"Woman, by God," said Barry. "Is it?"

It was. "Here, take my cloak," Barry said, for the poor thing now stood gawping and shivering. He put the cloak over her shoulders. Mechanically she pulled it round her, muttering, "Gratias ago, domine."

"Latin!" Lenoir shouted. "A woman speaking Latin?" It took him longer to get over that shock than it did Bota to get over hers. She was, it seemed, a slave in the household of the Sub-Prefect of North Gaul, who lived on the smaller island of the muddy island-town called Lutetia. She spoke Latin with a thick Celtic brogue, and did not even know who was Emperor in Rome in her day. A real barbarian, Lenoir said with scorn. So she was, an ignorant, taciturn, humble barbarian with tangled hair, white skin, and clear grey eyes. She had been waked from a sound sleep. When they convinced her that she was not dreaming, she evidently assumed that this was some prank of her foreign and all-powerful master the Sub-Prefect, and accepted the situation without further questions. "Am I to serve you, my masters?" she inquired timidly but without sullenness, looking from one to the other.

"Not me," Lenoir growled, and added in French to Barry, "Go on; I'll sleep in the store-room." He departed.

Bota looked up at Barry. No Gauls, and few Romans, were so magnificently tall; no Gauls and no Romans ever spoke so kindly. "Your lamp (it was a candle, but she had never seen a candle) is nearly burnt out," she said, "shall I blow it out?"

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For an additional two sols a year the landlord let them use the store-room as a second bedroom, and Lenoir now slept alone again in the main room of the garret. He observed his friend's idyll with a brooding, unjealous interest. The professor and the slave-girl loved each other with delight and tenderness. Their pleasure overlapped Lenoir in waves of protective joy. Bota had led a brutal life, treated always as a woman but never as a human. In one short week she bloomed, she came alive, evincing beneath her gentle passiveness a cheerful, clever nature. "You're turning out a regular Parisienne," he heard Barry accuse her one night (the attic walls were thin.) She replied, "If you knew what it is for me not to be always defending myself, always afraid, always alone . . ."

Lenoir sat up on his cot and brooded. About midnight, when all was quiet, he rose and noiselessly prepared the pinches of sulfur and silver, drew the pentagram, opened the book. Very softly he read the spell. His face was apprehensive.

In the pentagram appeared a small white dog. It cowered and hung its tail, then came shyly forward, sniffed Lenoir's hand, looked up at him with liquid eyes and gave a modest, pleading whine. A lost puppy . . . Lenoir stroked it. It licked his hands and jumped all over him, wild with relief. On its white leather collar was a silver plaque engraved, "Jolie. Dupont, 36 rue de Seine, Paris VIe."

Jolie went to sleep, after gnawing a crust, curled up under Lenoir's chair. And the alchemist opened the book again and read, still softly, but this time without self-consciousness, without fear, knowing what would happen.

* * *

EMERGING from his store-room-bedroom-honeymoon in the morning, Barry stopped short in the doorway. Lenoir was sitting up in bed, petting a white puppy, and deep in conversation with the person sitting on the foot of the bed, a tall redhaired woman dressed in silver. The puppy barked. Lenoir said, "Good morning!" The woman smiled wondrously.

"Jumping Jesus," Barry muttered (in English). Then he said, "Good morning. When are you from?" The effect was Rita Hayworth, sublimated—Hayworth plus the Mona Lisa, perhaps? "From Altair, about seven thousand years from now," she said, smiling still more wondrously. Her French accent was worse than that of a football-scholarship freshman. "I'm an

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archaeologist, I was excavating the ruins of Paris III. I'm sorry I speak the language so badly, of course we know it only from inscriptions."

"From Altair? The star? But you're human—I think—"

"Our planet was colonized from Earth about four thousand years ago,—that is, three thousand years from now." She laughed, most wondrously, and glanced at Lenoir. "Jehan explained it all to me, but I still get confused."

"It was a dangerous thing to try it again, Jehan" Barry accused him. "We've been awfully lucky, you know."

"No," said the Frenchman. "Not lucky."

"But after all it's black magic you're playing with—Listen—I don't know your name, madame."

"Kislk," she said.

"Listen, Kislk," Barry said without even a stumble, "Your science must be fantastically advanced—is there any magic? Does it exist? Can the laws of Nature really be broken, as we seem to be doing?"

"I've never seen nor heard of an authenticated case of magic."

"Then what goes on?" Barry roared. "Why does that stupid old spell work for Jehan, for us, that one spell, and here, nowhere else, for nobody else, in five—no, eight—no, fifteen thousand years of recorded history? Why? Why? And where did that damn puppy come from?"

"The puppy was lost," Lenoir said, his dark face grave. "Somewhere near this house, on the Isle St-Louis."

AND I was sorting potsherds," Kislk said, also gravely, "in a housesite, Island 2, Pit 4, Section D. A lovely Spring day, and I hated it. Loathed it. The day, the work, the people around me." Again she looked at the gaunt little alchemist, a long, quiet look. "I tried to explain it to Jehan last night. We have improved the race, you see. We're all very tall, healthy, and beautiful. No fillings in our teeth. All skulls from Early America have fillings in the teeth . . . Some of us are brown, some white, some gold-skinned. But all beautiful, and healthy, and well-adjusted, and aggressive, and successful. Our professions and degree of success are preplanned for us in the State Pre-School Homes. But there's an occasional genetic flaw. Me, for instance. I was trained as an archaeologist because the Teachers saw that I really didn't like people, live people. People bored me. All like me on the outside, all alien to me on the inside. When everything's alike, which place is home . . . But now I've seen an unhygienic room with insufficient heating. Now

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I've seen a cathedral not in ruins. Now I've met a living man who's shorter than me, with bad teeth and a short temper. Now I'm home, I'm where I can be myself, I'm no longer alone!"

"Alone," Lenoir said gently to Barry. "Loneliness, eh? Loneliness is the spell, loneliness is stronger . . . Really it doesn't seem unnatural."

Bota was peering round the doorway, her face flushed between the black tangles of her hair. She smiled slyly and said a polite Latin good-morning to the newcomer.

"Kislk doesn't know Latin," Lenoir said with immense satisfaction. "We must teach Bota some French. French is the language of love, anyway, eh? Come along, let's go out and buy some bread, I'm hungry."

Kislk hid her silver tunic under the useful and anonymous cloak, while Lenoir pulled on his moth-eaten black gown. Bota combed her hair, while Barry thoughtfully scratched a louse-bite on his neck. Then they set forth to get breakfast. The alchemist and the interstellar archaeologist went first, speaking French; the Gaulish slave and the professor from Indiana followed, speaking Latin, and holding hands. The narrow streets were crowded, bright with sunshine. Above them Notre Dame reared its two square towers against the sky. Beside them the Seine rippled softly in all its shimmering grandeur. It was April in Paris, and on the banks of the river the chestnuts were in bloom.

THE END

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NEW WORLDS

By ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

NO book has had greater effect on the literature of the world than the Holy Bible *and the science-fiction genre has scarcely been immune from its influence. An itemization of all the science fiction that in part or whole gains its inspiration from the bible would be a major bibliographical project in itself, but certainly one of the most grim and fascinating themes derived thereof is the story of Noah and the flood.* New Worlds *by Erle Stanley Gardner is based on the premise that a shift in the Earth's poles has caused a second flood and he spiritedly describes the consequences and adventure inherent in such a catastrophe.*

New Worlds *is in the grand tradition of the world catastrophe and is a thrilling story, extrapolated from sound considerations. It should be asked, then, in what way Erle Stanley Gardner's story is different from some of the very fine yarns of a similar nature which preceded it? Certainly the classic of them all,* The Second Deluge *by Garrett P. Serviss (1911), wherein Cosmo Versal duplicates Noah's feat and builds a gigantic ark to see the human race through, would be difficult to improve upon. Another possibility for saving at least a fragment of mankind was demonstrated by the prize-winning entrants to a contest sponsored by* WONDER STORIES *in its Feb., 1933 issue. An unfinished story,* The Moon Doom *by Nathaniel Salisbury, had the land masses flooded as the moon approached too close to the Earth. Readers William Lichtenstein, Wesley P. Baird and Clinton Earle Fiske completed it in round-robin style in three more installments and had seven men and women survive by circling the earth in an airtight plane as a satellite until the innundation subsided.* Deluge *by S. Fowler Wright was a hard-cover best seller in 1928*

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and was purchased by RKO for a motion picture of the same name released in 1933. In Deluge, *shifts in the earth's surface floods the continents, wiping out most of mankind. The novel studies human psychology under post-deluge conditions and speculates on the nature of the new society that will emerge.*

Stated simply, The Second Deluge *took a cosmic view of the breakdown of civilization in the event of a watery catastrophe;* The Moon Doom *represented those stories concerned with scientific ingenuity for survival and* Deluge *explored human nature. These three broadly represent the major categories under which world catastrophe stories are grouped.* New Worlds *falls under none of these categories but is premeditatedly written to fill a psychological need on the part of science fiction readers.*

New Worlds *underscores the knowledge on the part of the author that the reason world catastrophe stories, regardless of the nature of the disaster, are so popular is that they vicariously release the individual from the responsibilities of family, law and conscience. They mark the demise of everything that binds, inhibits or restrains. Gardner is primarily concerned with using the cataclysm as a device for releasing a small group of individuals to unusual adventure. While he graphically describes the catastrophe, for it is far too exciting an event to pass up, he incorporates elements of the western, detective and jungle story to stress* personalized *suspense. The doom may be horrible but it symbolizes an end to the old order and "escape" for the reader. All the old laws are gone and the reader, identifying with one of the survivors, can wipe the slate clean and start over again.*

CHAPTER I

Flood!

PHIL BREGG was a stranger in the city, and felt the fact to the very utmost. He was heart-heavy and homesick, and he was sick of the rain. It had started the night before. On the Western cattle ranges he had seen occasional cloudbursts; never such a rain, however, as was sheeting down in the city. Being a stranger, he failed to realize that the rain was a phenomenal downpour. He took it much for granted, even when he had found the street curb-full.

Now, swaying in the subway as the train lurched over the rails, he studied those opposite him—the steaming garments, the soggy feet. It was early, too early for the rush hour.

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Life in the big city was all right for those who wanted it, not for him. He idly noticed the headlines of a newspaper in the hands of a reader opposite him. "Unprecedented Flood Conditions Sweep Country."

Phil Bregg yawned. Then his eye caught a subheadline. "Arizona Drenched!"

An involuntary exclamation came from Phil's lips. The man who held the newspaper looked up, caught Phil's eye on the sheet, and fastened him with a look of cold disapproval. Phil, with the ready friendliness of the open spaces, sought to explain matters.

"Arizona's my State," he said. "I seen it was raining there, and that's sure some news."

In his own State the remark would have brought forth a smile, a greeting, perhaps a handshake. On the New York subway it merely caused people to stare at him with cold, impersonal curiosity.

Phil felt a red flush mounting under the bronzed skin. His big hands felt awkward and ill at ease. He seemed all hands and feet, felt ashamed, yet realized bitterly that it was these others who should feel ashamed.

A hand touched his sleeve. He looked down and to one side. A girl was smiling up at him.

"I spent a winter in Arizona," she said, "and I know just how you must feel. It's funny it's raining there. Why, down in Tucson—"

Nothing in his life had ever felt quite so good to Phil as the touch of that hand, the sound of the words, the friendly eyes.

"Tucson, ma'am! You know the place? Why—"

And the car suddenly, abruptly lurched to a dead stop.

PHIL looked at the black walls of the subway and forgot the words that were on his tongue. He felt very much buried alive. His wet garments were clammy. There was the dank drip of death in the air.

"Ugh!" he said.

The girl's form was tense, she was staring at the windows.

There was a red light ahead, between the rails. Now a man came running forward. The motorman lowered a glass. There was a jumble of words. Out of the darkness ahead came the tail end of another subway train, backing up.

Their own car lurched into motion, started backing.

The girl gave an exclamation.

"Trouble ahead. I'll be late at the office!"

But the car continued its reverse, gathering speed. And the train ahead was also reversing.

"What's the trouble?" yelled a man in the back of the car, but the question was unanswered.

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An air whistle screamed a warning signal at intermittent intervals. There came a burst of light, and the car stopped.

A guard bellowed orders.

"Everybody'll have to get off here and go to the surface. Take surface transportation to your destination. There's trouble ahead in the subway!"

There was a muttered chorus of protest. Some man was demanding the return of his fare. Others were clamoring for explanations.

"Hurry!" bawled the guard. "There's water in the subway!"

Phil Bregg didn't know cities, but he knew men, and he knew emergencies. He recognized an undertone of something that was akin to panic in the tones of the guard's voice.

"Hurry," he said. "It sounds serious," and he gripped the arm of the young lady who had been in Tucson.

She let him make a way for her through the crowd, swirled up the stairs in the midst of a confused boiling mass of jabbering people.

They emerged into a drab, wet daylight, and were greeted by water. The street was filled from curb to curb. Taxicabs were grinding forward slowly. Here and there cars were stalled. People were standing open-mouthed, up to their ankles in water, watching the street.

The rain was sheeting down from a leaden sky without interruption or cessation.

Phil grinned.

"I've seen cloudbursts in Arizona," he said, "and a fellow's saddle can get awfully wet at times, but I don't think I've ever been wetter in my life."

The girl's face was puckered with concern.

"This is serious," she said, "and the water seems to be rising. There's quite a current you can feel."

Phil pointed to some of the towering skyscrapers that stretched upward until their towers were lost in the moisture.

"Well there seems to be lots of room to climb!"

She nodded.

"Let's get inside. I want to telephone the office."

THEY climbed marble stairs, pushing their way through a crowd of people who were taking refuge there from the water, people who were staring, silent, wet, looking very much like sheep huddled on a small island in the midst of a rising river.

They entered a foyer which looked very normal and workaday. A cigar stand was in one corner. A uniformed elevator starter was starting the elevators. A long board of colored lights marked the progress of the cages as they shot up and down.

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"Sorry," said a voice; "no loitering in the foyer. If you've got business, go on up."

"I want a telephone," said the girl.

The man in uniform made a motion with a gloved hand.

"Sorry, but there's an emergency. No loitering in the foyer. Those are orders."

He turned away to speak to a frightened faced woman who was holding a whimpering child in her arms.

"Sorry, but you can't stay here . . ."

And the words were lost in the noise that was made by two dozen people storming into the entrance at once. For the water, in place of streaming silently past the building in a rising sheet, had suddenly reared the crest of a miniature wave, and rose a good eighteen inches at once.

Phil pushed the girl toward an elevator.

"You can get a telephone in an office upstairs," he said. "There's going to be a riot here."

The girl allowed herself to be pushed into the elevator. The door clanged, and the cage shot upward.

"There must be a broken dam somewhere," explained the girl. "There couldn't be this much water collected from the rain. And the drains are probably clogged. Heavens, I hate to think of the people that must be crowded in the subway! I hope the water doesn't get any higher!"

The elevator was whisking upward.

"Express to the thirtieth floor," said the operator.

"Thirtieth," said the girl.

The cage swung to a sickening stop, a door opened, and, abruptly, the lights went out. The elevator operator worked the handle of the door, swung the elevator control from side to side.

"Lucky you called," he grinned. "Power's off."

Phil Bregg instinctively took the arm of the girl with the manner of a protector. "Let's get to a telephone," he said.

They walked down the corridor, trying doors; all were locked. Here and there a man ran past them. From the street below sounded a vague rumbling, rushing noise. It was so like the roar of traffic that neither one paid any attention to it for a while.

They finally found an open office. The place was deserted. The girl went to the telephone, tried it, muttered an exclamation.

"The line's dead," she explained.

Through the windows the sound of the roar became louder. There was a shrill note underlying it, a wailing ululation of sound that was like a composite scream.

"Let's look out," she said. "It

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sounds like traffic has resumed. I can get a cab."

SHE walked to one of the front windows of the deserted office, peered out, gave a little scream and jumped back, hand to her throat.

"What is it?"

She motioned toward the window.

"Look!"

He pressed his face to the glass, looked down.

The buildings formed a concrete cañon, irregular in its skyline, broken here and there by much lower buildings. Phil, unaccustomed to these cañons of steel and concrete could see nothing wrong for a second or two until his eyes focused through the dampened surface of the window upon the street below, a threadlike thoroughfare along which black objects were moving.

At first he thought traffic had started again. Then he saw it was sweeping in one direction, and in one direction alone. Next he observed that traffic wasn't moving of its own accord. A sullen, roaring stream of water was rushing in a black torrent through the street, sweeping automobiles along, sending black specks which were people swirling and spinning, sweeping them onward.

Here and there a man was swimming, trying vainly to stem the tide. A man clutched at an open window in one of the buildings as he was swept by, tried to crawl in. He was painfully slow and deliberate about it. He seemed to be hardly moving. Phil wanted to shout at him to wake up.

Then he saw that it was the power of the current which was pulling the man back into the stream. The muscles fought against the grip of the torrent, and the man dragged himself in the window.

Another man caught the side of the same window, tried to pull himself in. The water dragged him back, broke loose his handhold, sucked him into the current once more and whisked him off.

Phil located the source of the roaring sound. The water was rushing against the corners of the buildings, piling up in frothy masses of tumbled foam, just as water rushes over a submerged rock in a mountain torrent.

Phil turned back to the girl, grinned.

"Well," he said, "it's a long ways below us. Let's walk up to the top floor and look over the city. Maybe we can see where the water's coming from."

"It's fifteen stories up," said the girl.

Phil grinned.

"It'll be good exercise."

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She nodded, white faced, tense. They started climbing. Somewhere, in the big office building, a girl was having hysterics, and the sound of her screams echoed from the mahogany doors and the marble facings of the hall.

They stopped twice to rest, then dragged themselves up to the last floor.

"There's a tower," said the girl. "Let's see if it's open."

They found a winding staircase, continued to climb, came to a door that was open. Rain was whipping through the oblong of the opening, and water was trickling down the stairs, forming in little pools.

Phil took her elbow, and they fought their way through the doorway. As they did so, the big skyscraper shivered a little, as though a restless tremor had run through the steel framework. The tower seemed to swing.

"Must be moving in the wind," said Phil.

They pushed against the wind to the edge of the building. The rain stung their faces, then, as the wind let up for a moment, ceased to beat against them.

They looked down.

THE water was hissing along the street now. There were no more automobiles being swept along on the crest of the tide. Phil had an idea the stream was now too deep for automobiles.

But there were innumerable black dots that were being swirled past, and those black dots were screaming, shouting, twisting, turning, vanishing from sight. The street corner was a vast whirlpool into the vortex of which men were being drawn like straws.

The rain ceased abruptly.

Drifting cloud scud overhead broke for an instant, and there was just a glimpse of sunshine.

"It's clearing up!" called Phil.

And the rain seemed to have ceased over some considerable area. The patch of blue sky widened. The warm rays of the sun shone reassuringly.

A man came rushing from a little penthouse on the top of the building. In his hand he carried an instrument that looked like a ship captain's sextant. He stood at the side of the building, raised the instrument to his eyes.

For a moment he stood so, the sunshine gilding him, a morsel of a man standing outlined against the rim of the lofty building. Then he lowered the instrument, took the magnifying glass on the reading arm to his eye, whipped a watch from his pocket, and apparently saw Phil and the girl standing there for the first time.

He stared at them with eyes that were wide, seemed a little glassy.

"Over five degrees out of the

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proper position in the plane of the ecliptic!" he shouted. "Do you hear me? Over five degrees!"

Phil Bregg stepped forward, interposing his bulk between the girl and the man.

"That's all right, brother," he said in a soothing tone. "There's been a dam broke somewhere, and the water's coming up, but it'll go down in a little while."

The man made an impatient gesture.

"Fools!" he said. "Don't you see what's happening? The water won't go down. It'll come up and up. It's the end of a race!"

He turned and strode rapidly toward the penthouse.

"I've seen 'em get the same way when there's been a stampede," said Phil, smiling reassuringly at the girl. "It's clearing up now. The water'll be going down in a few minutes. These busted dams make the water come up fast, but it goes down just as fast."

Yet there was a vague disquiet in his soul which manifested itself in his voice.

The girl nodded bravely, then her eyes widened and she shouted, "Oh, Oh, look! Look! *Look!*"

CHAPTER II

Beginning of the End

FAR down the street the towers of one of the great skyscrapers loomed, topped by a central dominant tower, the whole structure dotted with windows which showed as regular black oblongs, small and dark, contrasting with the white of the building.

That tower which dominated the very sky itself was leaning over at a sharp angle. As the girl pointed, the tower tilted again, checked itself swayed, and then started to fall.

It was slow, majestic in its fall, like the descent of a mighty giant of the forest under the ax of the woodsman. The building swung over, moving faster and faster, yet seeming to take an eternity in its collapse.

When it had reached an angle where the central tower seemed to be almost at forty-five degrees, the top of the structure buckled. Masonry broke loose and crashed out as an independent shower of debris.

That was the beginning of a sudden disintegration of the skyscraper. The frame seemed to buckle in a dozen places. The speed of descent increased. The building vanished amongst the smaller edifices which surrounded it.

For an instant there was silence. The skyscraper had simply vanished. Then came a terrific cloud of fine rock dust, a great spray of water, and, after a second or two, a shivering roar that shook the consciousness, tore at the ear drums, seemed

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to reverberate alike through ground and air.

And, as though that roar had been a signal, the clouds swallowed up the sun again, and the sheeted rain whipped down in torrents.

The man came running out from the penthouse.

"What was it?" he asked, impatiently.

The girl's white lips moved, but made no sound.

"One of the buildings fell," said Phil, and his own voice was high pitched with excitement, as well as a recognition of their own danger.

The man nodded.

"Foundations undermined by the rush of water, ground giving way," he said. "There'll be earthquakes, too."

His own voice had lost its excitement, seemed calm and controlled now.

Phil yelled, "We're in danger here. Let's get out of this building. It's swaying right now! C'mon."

"Danger!" the man said; "there is no danger. Our fate is assured. I had hoped this might be a spot of high ground when the compensated stresses of balance should get to work, but apparently they are retarded, or else my calculations were in error."

"What do you mean?" asked Phil.

THE man shrugged his shoulders.

"It's the end. Look here. I've got my complete observatory up there on the tower. I've been able to predict this for years. Not as to the time—except within a few years. The newspapers gave me a lot of publicity three years ago, then every one forgot about me. I wasn't even a joke any more.

"And now it's happening, just as I said it would. Astronomically it's been inevitable. Historically it's authenticated. Yet man would never listen."

"What," asked Phil, "are you talking about?"

"The flood," said the man. "Every savage tribe has an old legend of a great flood that swept over the earth. It rained and the waters rose. Everywhere we find geological evidences of such a flood. Yet the thing, as described, is obviously impossible. It couldn't rain enough to raise the waters of the earth to the point described in the legends of the flood.

"But there's another factor. The earth has changed its poles. There's abundant evidence that our north pole, so-called, was once the abode of tropical life, and that the climate changed overnight.

"There are mastodons frozen into the solid ice. They've been there for thousands of years.

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Their stomachs are filled with bulbs and foliage which were tropical in character. Yet their flesh is sufficiently well preserved so that it can be cooked and eaten.

WHAT does that mean? It means that in the morning they were roaming about, eating their meal of tropical fruits. It means that by night they were dead and frozen stiff and have been frozen for thousands of years.

"The earth changed its poles. That changed the tides, caused old continents to fall, new ones to arise, and water came rushing in from the ocean. It's only logical that such a phenomenon was accompanied by terrific rains as the warmer air became condensed in the colder climates which were created. That led to the belief that the flood was caused by rain. It wasn't. The rain was merely a factor.

"The so-called flood was caused by a changing of the poles of the earth. The Biblical account, in the main, is entirely correct. Except that man, trusting to his limited powers of observation and the inadequate knowledge of the time, attributed the rise of water to the rain.

"It's the same form of reasoning that made you seek to ascribe this beginning of the rise of waters to the breaking of a dam."

The man ceased speaking, looked from face to face.

"But," said the girl, "is this another flood? I thought there wouldn't be any more . . ."

The scientist laughed.

"This isn't a flood. It is merely a changing of the earth's poles. You might as well be philosophic about it. Nature always progresses. She does that by a series of wave motions. She builds, she sustains, and she destroys, and she rebuilds upon the ruins of destruction. That is the law of progress."

The building gave another shiver.

Phil took the girl's arm.

"At least," he said, "we can fight for our lives. We'll go down to the level of the flood. Then when the building starts to fall we can jump into the water."

The scientist laughed.

"And when you're in the water, what then?"

Phil Bregg clamped his bronzed jaw.

"We'll keep on fighting," he said. "If Nature wants to destroy me she's probably strong enough to win out in a fight, but nobody can ever say I was a quitter."

He became aware that the scientist was contemplating him with dreamy eyes, eyes that were filmed with thought.

"Every time there's been a destruction on a grand scale," he said, "Nature has saved a few of

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the species. That's the attitude that's in harmony with evolution, young man, and I think I'll just tag along with you, as long as I have the power to function on this plan of consciousness; it'll be interesting to see just what Nature does to you.

"Wait just a minute until I get an emergency package I've had prepared for just such a contingency."

And he jog-trotted into the penthouse.

The girl shuddered.

"It seems too cruel . . . too awful. Think of it, a whole city!"

Phil shook his head, solemnly.

"Not a whole city," he said, "a whole world!"

WHATEVER else he might have said was checked by the arrival of the man, carrying a canvas sack, slung over his shoulder with a rope.

Phil Bregg looked at the man's slight figure, at the bulging sack, and grinned.

"Pard," he said, "you may be a shark on this scientific stuff, but there's a lot about packing things that you don't know. Here, let me show you how we pack that sack."

He took it from the man's shoulder, made a few swift motions, slung the ropes into a sort of harness, slipped the sack to his own broad back.

"There you are," he said. "See how she rides? Right close to the back. That keeps you from fighting balance all the time—"

His words were swallowed in a terrific roar.

"Another skyscraper down," said Phil, grimly.

The scientist pointed.

"The skyline," he said, "is *changing*!"

And it was obviously true. From where they stood they could see the older towers of the lofty buildings of the down town section, and they were falling like trees before a giant gale. Even as they looked, their eyes beheld two buildings toppling over simultaneously.

"The ones down on the lower ground are going first. The ocean's sweeping away the foundations," said the scientist. "It is all as I predicted. And, do you know, they actually held me under observation in the psychopathic ward because I had the temerity to make such a prediction.

"In the face of the unmistakable evidences that such a thing had happened in the past, the absolute assurance that it was bound to happen in the future, the indisputable evidence that Nature destroys the old before she starts to build the new, mere men, serene in their fancied security, contemplated imprisoning me because I dared to see the truth. They'd have done it, too, if

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they hadn't finally decided I was 'harmless,' something to be laughed at.

"Laughed at! And because I dared to read aright the printed page of the book of nature that was spread out where all might see it!

"I talked to them of the procession of the equinoxes. I spoke to them of the gradual shifting of the poles, of the variation of Polaris. I spoke to them of changing stresses, of unstable equilibriums, and they laughed. Damn them, let them laugh now!"

Phil tapped him on the shoulder.

"That's all right, old-timer, but we're going, and you'd better come along if you're going to see what happens."

CHAPTER III

Into the Water

PHIL BREGG led the way, setting a pace down the winding stairways that taxed them to keep up. From time to time the building gave little premonitory shivers of a fate that could not long be delayed.

"The beginning of earthquakes," said the man in the rear. "As the new stresses and gravitational pulls start in, there will be increased disturbances. And it's going to be interesting to see whether the orbit of the moon is going to be affected. If it isn't, there'll be cross tidal influences which'll twist the very structure of the earth. In fact, there's a law of tidal limits within which tides destroy the substance. . . ."

His words were drowned out as the whole building swayed drunkenly upon its foundations.

"Hurry!" screamed the girl.

Phil Bregg, accustomed to dangers, turned to grin at her reassuringly.

"That's all right. Going down's faster than coming up. We're making pretty fair progress right now. It won't be long until we reach the water level."

It was hard to make any progress now. The stairways were smooth marble, and they were inclined at an angle. But the trio fought their way down, making the best speed they could.

Only once did they encounter any other people. That was a man who was running down one of the corridors. He cried out some unintelligible comment to them, but they could not understand, nor did they dare to wait.

They had long since lost track of floors. Their knees ached with the effort of descending, keeping their balance on the slanting steps. They had no idea whether there were two floors or twenty below them, whether the water was rising or falling.

And, abruptly, as they round-

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ed a corner in the sloping stairway, emerged upon a slanting corridor, they came to the water level.

Windows at the end of the hall were smashed in by the force of the water and the drifting debris which dotted the current. The water was muddy, turbulent, a sea of dancing objects. Here and there people drifted by, clinging to floating objects, or fighting their way in frantic strokes toward some building which seemed to offer a place of refuge.

"What floor is it?" asked the man.

"The eighth, I think," said the girl.

Suddenly Phil checked himself with an exclamation of astonishment.

"Look!" he said.

There was a door sagging open. The glass which composed the upper half had been broken. A big plate glass window in one side had cracked, and a big piece had dropped out of the center, which held a sign.

That sign read:

ALCO MOTORBOAT CORPORATION

And back of the plate glass, held in position on wooden supports, looking neatly trim and seaworthy, was a big motor cruiser with a cabin, and a flight of mahogany stairs leading up from the floor to the hull.

"Let's get in there!" said Phil.

The girl shook her head. "We could never get it out."

"It weighs a terrific amount," said the scientist, "but, wait a minute. Look!"

AS he spoke, the building shivered.

The water was rising steadily. The floor rocked. The cruiser slipped from its wooden supports. The mahogany stairway crashed into splinters. The cruiser careened over on its side, then began to slip down the wet floor.

"Out of the way!" yelled Phil.

They fought to one side.

The cruiser skidded down the slope of the wet floor, hit the frosted glass and mahogany partition marked in gilt letters with the words:

OFFICES OF THE PRESIDENT

Those partitions suddenly dissolved in a mass of splinters and a shower of broken glass. The sliding cruiser, moving majestically down the wet incline into deeper water, as though she were being launched down greased skids, came to rest against the far wall of the building, floating calmly upon a level keel, in water which was some six or eight feet deep.

"Regular launching," said Phil. "Personally, I consider that an omen. That's the outer wall. If we could only get her through there she's ready for sea."

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"Wait," said the scientist. "There's just a chance! If we could tow her over to that other end, and then had the partition out between those two big windows, she'd just about go through. There's some dynamite in that sack of emergency equipment. Here, let me have it."

He dragged an oiled silk container out of the sack, opened it.

He fought his way toward the side of the building, busied himself there for a few moments, then gave an exclamation of disappointment.

"Matches!" he said. "Of course I had to forget them. Those in my pocket are wet."

Phil laughed.

"Well, that's a habit of the cow country that's hard to get away from. I've got a waterproof match box in my pocket."

He tossed over the match box. The little man caught it with eager hands. There was the scrape of a match, and then the sputter of flame and a hissing steam of thin blue smoke.

He was scrambling toward them.

"Quick!" he said. "Out of the way!"

They got out into the outer corridor. The explosion came almost at once.

They were impatient, eager in their desire to see what had happened. Of a sudden that cruiser, floating so serenely upon the water, seemed a thing of refuge, something of permanent stability in this world which had suddenly swung over on a slope.

They found that the explosive had done its work. There was a great jagged hole in the building, against which the water lapped with gurgling noises.

"Now to get her out," said Phil. "We'll have to have power of some sort!"

BUT he had reckoned without the force of the current. Already an eddy had been created in the water, and the cruiser had swung broadside, the keel at the bow scraping along the tile floor of that which had been a display room.

"The first thing is to get aboard, anyway," he said.

He took the girl's arm, piloted her down the inclined floor to the side of the boat, found that the side of the deck was too far above water for him to reach.

"I'm giving you a boost!" he said. And he shifted his grip to her knees, gave her a heave, and sent her up to where she could scramble to the deck. "Now see if there's a rope," he called to her.

"One here," she said.

"Okay, fasten one end and throw over the other end."

She knotted the rope, flung it over.

"You and the emergency stuff

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next," said Phil to the scientist, and he grasped him, swung him out into the water, sent him up the rope, flung up the sack, grasped the end of the rope himself, pulled himself to the deck.

"Well, well, here's a boat hook, all lashed into place, and there's a little boat with some oars, all the comforts of home!" he laughed.

He untied the boat hook, an affair of mahogany and polished brass. "All spiffy," he said. "Well, folks, here we go out to sea!"

And he caught the boat hook about one of the jagged girders of twisted steel, and leaned his weight against it. Slowly, the boat swung from the eddy which was circling in the half submerged room, and slid its bow out to the opening.

Almost at once the current caught them, whipped the bow of the boat around. The stern smashed against the side of the building with a terrific jar. The impact knocked Phil from his feet.

He rolled over, grasped at a handhold, gave an exclamation of dismay. He felt sure the shell of the craft would be crushed.

But she was strongly built, and her hull withstood the strain. She lurched over at an angle, and the water rushed up the hull, then she won free, and they found themselves out in the center of the stream of water, rushing forward, buildings slipping astern.

"We've got to find some way of steering her," yelled Phil. "If the current throws us against one of those buildings we'll be smashed to splinters. Can we start the motor?"

The scientist made no reply. He was too busy taking observations.

IT was the girl, standing in the bow, who screamed the warning. The boat was swinging in toward the ruins of a collapsed structure. Just ahead of it a new building was in the course of construction, and the steel girders, thrust up through the black waters, were like teeth of disaster, thrust up to receive the boat.

Phil Bregg ran forward.

"How much rope is there?" he asked.

"A whole coil of the light rope. Then there's a shorter length of the heavy rope."

Phil nodded. His bronzed hands flashed swiftly through the making of knots. He swung the rope around his head, let the coil gain momentum, and swung the loop out, straight and true.

IT settled over the top of one of the girders. Phil swung a few swift dally turns around the bitts in the bow, shouted to the

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girl to get the heavier rope ready.

Then the rope tautened, the craft shifted, swung broadside, and the rope became as taut as a bowstring.

Phil eased the strain by letting the rope slip slightly over the bitts, then, when he had lessened the shock, made a reversed loop, holding the line firm.

The current boiled past the bow. The line hummed with the strain.

"Maybe we can hold it here, for a while, anyway. The heavy rope will serve when we can get a chance to drop it over. There's a winch here, and I can probably run the boat in closer."

He turned to look behind him, and grinned, the sort of a grin that an outdoor man gives when he realizes he is facing grave danger.

"Looks like we've got to stay right here. If we break loose we're gone!"

And he pointed to a place where a building had collapsed, forming an obstruction in the current. The water fell over this like a dam, sucked in great whirlpools which gave forth an ever increasing roar.

A small boat, sucked into those whirlpools, would be capsized or crushed against the obstruction, and those who were thrown into the current would be hurtled downward.

IT was at that moment that the scientist came toward them.

"The forces of stress equalization are at work now," he observed. "You doubtless notice the peculiar agitation of the water, the waving of the buildings . . . Ah, there goes our skyscraper! An earthquake of increasing violence is rocking the soil."

The skyscraper in which they had taken refuge came down with a roar. The skyline flattened as by magic. Buildings came down with an accompaniment of sound which ceased to be a separate, distinguishable sound, but was a vast cadence of destruction, a sullen roar of terrific forces reducing the works of man to dust.

Where one had seen the more or less ruined skyline of a city, there was now only a turbulent, quake-shaken sea of heaving water and plunging débris.

And on the horizon loomed a vast wave, a great sea with sloping sides, a mighty wall of water that came surging toward them.

"Quick," yelled Phil, "down in the cabin and close everything. It's our only chance."

He pushed at the girl and the scientist, got them down the little companionway into the snug cabin.

"Maybe there's some gasoline in the—"

Phil had no chance to finish. The boat swung. There was a jar

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as the mooring line parted, and then they were thrust upward, and upward. The boat veered, rolled, and went over and over like a chip of wood in a mill race. Everything that was loose in the cabin was plunged about. There was no keeping one's feet.

Phil felt his head bang against the cooking stove, struggled to right himself, and his feet went out from under him. His head slammed against the floor. The craft rolled over and over, and Phil lost consciousness.

CHAPTER IV

Rushing—Where?

HE was aware of a slight nausea, of a splitting headache. He could hear voices that impinged upon his consciousness without carrying meaning. Slowly, bit by bit, he began to remember where he was. He remembered the disaster, the earthquake, that last wild rush of the tidal wave.

The words ceased to be mere sounds, and carried intelligence to his brain.

". . . must be a fire."

It was the girl who spoke.

"I should say it was a volcano, well away from us. There will probably be others," came from the scientist.

Phil sat up, and became conscious of a more or less violent rocking. The interior of the boat was almost dark. It was visible in a peculiar red half-light that showed objects in a vague, unnatural manner.

"Hello," said Phil, conscious of the throbbing in his head.

They came toward him, looks of concern on their faces.

"Are you all right?"

"Right as a rivet," said Phil. "What's happened?"

"We went over and over. We all got pretty badly shaken. You got a blow on the head and have been unconscious for several hours. The sky's overcast, both with clouds and some sort of a dust. There's an illumination that makes everything seem reddish, that Professor Parker thinks is from a volcano."

Phil nodded.

"So you're Professor Parker. I'm Phil Bregg of Fairbanks."

He glanced at the girl.

"I'm Stella Ranson," she said.

Phil found that they had placed him on one of the little berths in the cabin. He swung his feet over.

"Well, we seem to be on an even keel now. What can I do to help—anything?"

The Professor shook his head.

"The sea's comparatively calm. We have reason to believe there are earthquakes going on, probably quakes of considerable magnitude. We have found there is some gasoline in the fuel tanks, and a little kerosene in the stove

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and storage tanks. But we have no reason to waste any of it by starting the motor. So we're waiting. There is some motion, but it's not at all violent, and there's no wind to speak of. The rain's keeping up. You can hear it on the deck."

"Well," Phil grinned, "things could have been worse. When do we eat, if any?"

"There's some cold concentrated rations in the emergency kit," said Parker. "We were just discussing trying a fire in the kerosene cook stove and warming up some of the concentrated soup. We'll have to go pretty light on rations for a while, until we—er—experience a change."

"Drinking water?"

"The boat seems to have been fairly well supplied," said Parker. "Evidently they used her as a sort of a closing room where they could get a customer, cook a demonstration meal, and close the order."

"Then there must be some canned goods or something stored in her."

"We haven't found any as yet. There are cooking utensils, however."

Phil grinned at them.

"Find me a little flour, bacon and some baking powder, and I can give you some real chow," he said.

Parker grinned; the girl smiled.

"Well," she said, "eat, drink and be merry, because tomorrow . . ."

And her voice trailed off into silence as she realized the deadly aptness of the familiar saying.

PROFESSOR PARKER made a remark to fill in the sudden silence.

"I don't want you folks to get a mistaken impression about me. My title of 'professor' is merely a courtesy title. In fact, it has been applied in recent years more in a spirit of derision."

He was a small wisp of a man, pathetically earnest, with eyes that were intelligent, yet washed out in expression.

"Well, I don't know why any one should laugh at you!" exclaimed Stella, jumping to his defense. "You've been right, and it was horrid of the newspapers to give you the razz that way!"

Phil nodded his assent. "Now you are talkin', ma'am. And, if you'll get out that soup powder, professor, I'll get the fire going, and then I'll look around. There are lots of trick storage spaces on these yachts, and I may run on to a bit of flour yet."

He turned to the stove, primed it, pumped up the pressure tank, and had a fire going within a short time. Then, to his delight, he found that the couple had entirely overlooked a storage space in a closet back of the little sink.

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This closet had a label on the inner side of the door:

"Balanced Ration for a Six Weeks' Cruise—Suggested Supplies."

Phil grinned at them.

"Probably their idea of a six weeks' cruise when they were showing the ample storage space in the boat didn't agree with a healthy cowpuncher's idea of food; but it'll last for a while."

And he set about the preparation of a camp meal.

The girl watched him with wistful eyes.

"To-morrow," she said, "I'll take charge of the cooking. I've done quite a bit of it. But I did want to see some of your camp cooking to-night."

Phil Bregg chuckled.

"Maybe one meal of my cooking'll do what the flood didn't do, and put you under!"

He rolled up his sleeves, looked around him.

"Thunder!" he said. "Here I am wondering about fresh water for washing, and it's raining cloudbursts outside. Let's set some buckets and see that the tanks are filled up. There must be quite a water storage system here if they advertise the capacity of the boat for a six weeks' cruise!"

"Here," she said, "you take the buckets and fill the tanks. I'll do this and you can give us a camp meal some other time."

She stepped to the stove, took over the duties of chef, while Bregg and Parker fought their way out into the rain, set buckets where they would catch rain water, used some canvas coverings they found to act as funnels, and gradually filled the tanks.

The girl called them to a steaming, savory repast. Phil's healthy appetite made a sufficient dent in the food to make him realize that the supply he had discovered in the cupboard would last far short of six weeks unless he curbed his hunger.

They resumed their water carrying after the meal. Phil, working on the outside, became soaked to the skin. But the water tanks were filling, and the boat seemed as dry as a chip, a seaworthy little craft.

THERE was very little wave motion, and Phil called the attention of the professor to that fact.

"Yes," said Professor Parker, "this is not the sea proper. As nearly as I can determine, we are being swept in by the inrush of a body of water. Our direction is northwesterly, or it would have been northwesterly under our old compass. I don't know what is happening now. The compass keeps veering, and I'm satisfied it is due to a magnetic disturbance rather than a change in our course.

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"A continuation of our progress will take us to higher land, if the land is undisturbed. But we must remember that terrific tides and currents are being set up. It is possible we are 'drifting' on a tide that is traveling at a rate of speed which would be incredible were not the earth toppling on its axis."

"You think it is?" asked Phil.

The light of fanaticism came into the washed out eyes of the little man. "I know it is!" he said. "I knew it would happen, I predicted it, and I was ridiculed. They laughed at me simply because their scientific ideas, which were all founded upon terrestrial stability, didn't coincide with mine."

Phil nodded. "What do we do now, keep a watch?"

Professor Parker shrugged his shoulders.

"It won't do any good. But I want to make some calculations and check over certain data I've gathered. There's no reason why you two shouldn't sleep. Then I'll wake you up if anything happens."

Phil regarded his wet clothes.

"That's okay," he said. "There's a stateroom forward. Miss Ranson can take that. I'll bunk down here in the main cabin and give these clothes a chance to dry."

The girl nodded. "You'll call me if anything happens while I'm sleeping?"

The professor said he would.

Phil Bregg removed his soggy garments.

"A wonderful girl!" he said.

But the scientist didn't hear him. He was bent over the table, illuminated by the electric light which was running from the yacht's storage battery, and his fingers were dashing off figures on a sheet of paper, while his eyes had lost their washed out appearance and sparkled with excitement.

Phil felt instant drowsiness gripping him as he lay back on the berth and pulled one of the blankets over him. Outside, the rain pelted down on the roof of their little craft, and the hypnotic effect lulled him into almost instantaneous slumber.

HE awoke to find his shoulder being shaken, and his eyes opened to find daylight and the face of the professor.

Phil sat upright instantly.

"You were going to call me," he said, "and let me stand watch!"

Professor Parker's eyes were reddened slightly, and his face showed lines of strain, but he seemed filled with enthusiasm and strength.

"There was nothing you could have done," he said. "And the phenomena wouldn't have interested you. On the other hand I wouldn't have missed them for anything.

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"During the night a series of terrific tidal waves swept us on our course with a speed that I don't even dare to contemplate. The ocean seems to be rushing somewhere with a force and velocity which is absolutely unprecedented.

"What I am afraid of is that we may get into some huge vortex and be sucked down. I want to be able to steer clear of it if possible, and there's a little wind. Do you suppose we could set a sail?"

"It isn't a sail boat. It's a motor cruiser," said Phil, "but we might be able to get something on her that'd give us a chance to steer a bit, not to go any place, but to keep her pointed. Where's Miss Ranson?"

"Asleep. She came out about midnight, or what would have been midnight, and said she hadn't slept much. But she went back, and I think she's asleep. It's only four o'clock in the morning now, but the sun's up."

Phil looked out of the porthole.

"Why, it's quit raining!"

"Yes. It's been clear for three hours. I've been trying to check our progress by the stars, but they've changed position so rapidly I came to the conclusion the earth was still spinning.

"However, about half an hour ago it steadied down, and the course of the sun seems quite normal, around a plane which would indicate we are in the southern hemisphere, and, I should say, not a great distance from the new temperate zone. We may find the climate quite delightful."

Phil Bregg reached for his clothes, kicked off the blanket.

"Maybe we'll find a new continent or something."

The tone of the scientist was dry.

"Yes," he said, "maybe!"

In that moment Phil realized how utterly hopeless the man considered their plight. He was not expecting to live long, this strange man who had been predicting the catastrophe for years, but he was putting in every minute taking astronomical observations, checking data.

Phil grinned.

"How about breakfast?" he asked. Professor Parker frowned.

"I am afraid," he said, "that we will have to regulate the rapidity with which we consume our somewhat meager stock of rations. Now it is obvious that—"

The door of the little stateroom opened, and Stella Ranson stood on the threshold, smiling at them.

"Good morning, everybody; when do we eat?"

"Come on in and act as reinforcements," grinned Phil. "The professor doesn't need much food, and he's getting the idea that we should go on a diet or something. Now let's get this thing organized, professor. You act as chief

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navigator and collector of data. Miss Ranson can take charge of the interior, and I'll handle all the rough work and keep the crowd in grub. What do you say?"

"How can you keep us supplied with food when there is no food to be had?" asked the professor. "The world is devoid of life. There isn't so much as a duck within sight, and, if there were, we are without means to reduce it to food."

Phil grinned.

"You don't know me. I've never gone hungry for very long yet, and I've been in some mighty tough country."

Professor Parker shook his head, unsmilingly.

"I'm going to rig a sail. You can argue with Miss Stella. I think she'll convince you."

And Phil went up on deck to survey the mast, figure on a sail. The sunlight felt mellow and warm, and he stretched his arms, took a deep inhalation of the pure air, and then, as his eyes swept the horizon, suddenly blinked, rubbed his hand over his eyes, and shouted down the companionway.

"Hey, there. Here's land!"

CHAPTER V

A Tree-Top Landing

NO storm-tossed mariners, lost in an uncharted sea, ever greeted the cry with more enthusiasm. They might have been at sea for weeks instead of hours, the way they came swarming up the stairs. Even Professor Parker's face was lit with joy, and with a vast relief.

The upthrust mountain which reared above the ocean was close enough to show the fronds of foliage, the long leaves of palms that were like banana palms.

"Thought you said we were in the temperate zone," said Phil. "This looks like what my geography said the South Sea Islands looked like."

The scientist nodded.

"Quite right. I said we were in the new temperate zone. I didn't say anything about what zone it had been."

"But," protested the girl, "how could we have left New York yesterday and been swept down into the tropics?"

The professor grinned.

"That's the point. We weren't. The tropics were swept up to us. Take a bowl of water, put a match in it, turn the bowl. The match doesn't turn. That's because the water doesn't turn in the bowl. There isn't enough friction between the glass and the water to turn the bowl and its contents as a unit.

"To a more limited extent that's true of the earth, although I've had trouble getting my scientific friends to believe it. Simply because the water hasn't lagged

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behind in the daily rotation of the globe is no sign that it wouldn't lag if the motion were changed.

"The earth has been rotating in one way for millions of years, and the water has fallen into step, so to speak. Now look at that island. See how rapidly it's going past. Looks like we're moving at a terrific speed, but the earth is evidently swinging true on its new orbit.

"However, I look for the motion of the water to cease shortly. There should be a backwash which will do much to stem the force of the rushing water . . . Unless I'm mistaken, here it comes. Look there to the south. Isn't that a wall of water? Sure it is, a massive ground swell. It's moving rapidly. We must be in a very deep section of the ocean, or it would be breaking on top.

"Let's get down and close everything tightly."

"Judas Priest!" groaned Phil. "Have I got to ride some more bucking bronchos?"

"Quite probably," was the dry retort, "you'll have worse experiences than riding high tidal waves, my young, impatient, and impetuous friend!"

They tumbled back down the companionway again, battened everything down. The wave struck them before they were aware of it. They were swung up, up, up, and then down, then up again on a long swell, then down.

Then there was a roar and a smaller wave, the crest curling with foam, came at them. The roar sounded like a cataract.

"We'll go over sure," said Phil.

The wave hit them, but the little craft, angling up the foaming crest, kept on its keel, and the top of the wave went boiling by, leaving them rocking in a backwash.

"Now," said Professor Parker, "that should mark the beginning of some turbulent water, with, perhaps, a storm. Let's see where our land is."

And he thrust a cautious head through the companionway, suddenly ducked down.

"It's right on us!" he yelled.

PHIL jumped up, and was thrown from his feet by a jar that shivered the boat throughout its length. Then there was a scraping sound, and the crash of splintering wood.

The boat listed over at a sharp angle, held for a moment, then dropped abruptly to the tune of more splintering noises. Phil's feet skidded out from under him. He flung up an arm to protect his head, and came to a stop on the berth where he had spent the night. A moment later Stella Ranson catapulted into him, breaking the force of her fall by his arms, which caught her in a steady firm grip.

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"Easy all," said Phil. "Where's the professor? This looks like the end of the boat. All that splintering must have meant the timbers are crushed to smithereens!"

He scrambled to his feet, bracing himself, holding the girl against the sharp incline of the deck.

"Great heavens, we're up a tree," he said.

THE voice of the scientist came from one side of the cabin where his wattery eyes were plastered up against a porthole, surveying the countryside.

"We are not only up a tree," he said, "but we seem to be pretty well lodged there. We rode in on the crest of a wave which deposited us in the branches of this tree. I do not know the species, but it seems to be something like a mahogany tree. Undoubtedly, it is a tropical tree.

"We have sustained injuries to our boat, and the wave is quite likely to be succeeded by other waves. There's higher ground up the slope of this mountain, and I suggest we make for it without delay."

Phil grinned at the girl.

"Translated," he said, "that means we've got the only tree climbing boat in the world, and that we'd better beat it while the beating's good. Let's get that rope and put some knots in it. Then we can lower down our blankets and provisions. Personally, I'm a great believer in having all the comforts."

They fought their way to the outer deck of the boat, found that a jagged branch was stuck through the hull, that the boat would not float without extensive repairs first being made. There followed a period of activity, during which they knotted a rope, lowered down bundles of blankets and provisions.

Finally, they were safe on the ground, the boat marooned high in the tree, more than twenty feet above the ground. The waters had receded and roared a sullen, although diminutive surf, some twenty yards away from the roots of the tree.

"Well," said Phil, "I always hated to carry camp stuff on my back, but we can't go hungry, so here's where I start. This is entirely in my department. I'll make a couple of trips with the heavier stuff and then we'll be established in camp."

He divided it into two huge bundles, then swung one of the big rolls to his shoulder, and led the way up the slope.

They found a trail which Phil pronounced to be a game trail, although there was no sign of game. They followed this trail through a tangle of thick foliage to a ridge, up the ridge to a little shelf where a tree and an overhanging rock furnished shelter.

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HERE they made camp, some three hundred feet above the level of the ocean. Phil suggested they go higher, but the scientist, taking observations by holding his small sextant on the sun, insisted that the world had finished its weird toppling. He was inclined to think the poles had changed positions by a long swing of the globe, and that a new equilibrium had been established.

While he could make no accurate calculations in advance of knowledge of where the island was upon which they had effected a landing, he was inclined to think that the site of the new north pole was somewhere in the vicinity of England.

But all was mere conjecture, and Phil Bregg was more interested in matters at hand than in abstract scientific problems.

He made a trip back to the boat, brought up the second bundle of provisions, blankets, tools which he had taken from the yacht, and started making a camp.

"Now," said Phil, "what we need is a little more knowledge of what sort of a place we're in, and maybe some fresh meat. That means weapons. I've got a hand-ax, and I can sharpen up a sort of Indian spear and harden the point in the fire. That might net us a hog, or maybe a rabbit, if they have rabbits.

"But I saw some hog tracks on that trail, and while the upheaval may have washed some of them away, and may have frightened the balance of them into cover, I'll see what can be done."

He built a fire, cut down a hardwood sapling, trimmed it into a pointed spear, hardened the point in the fire, Indian fashion, and grinned at his audience.

"Here's where the hunting instinct comes in, and where the knowledge of reading trail I've picked up is going to help. You folks just promise me you'll stay here. I'll scout around.

"I'll be back inside of a couple of hours, and I may have game."

They agreed to wait in camp.

"And only put dry wood on that fire," warned Phil.

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Wet wood makes a smoke."

"But don't we want to make a smoke? Shouldn't we signal?"

Professor Parker favored her with a peculiar glance.

"To whom," he asked, "did you contemplate sending a signal?"

And, as realization of their predicament thrust itself once more upon the girl's consciousness, Phil softened the blow for her with a grin, and a joking remark.

"I want to save the smoke to cure a ham I'm going to bring in," and he swung the spear into position, and started up the slope, climbing steadily, yet stealthily.

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HE reached the summit of the peak within a matter of fifteen minutes, and was able to confirm his original impression that they were on an island. It was not over two miles broad, but seemed to stretch for eight or ten miles in a general easterly direction. It was a tumbled mass of jagged crests and Phil strongly suspected that what he was seeing as an island was merely the top of a high mountain range which had been entirely above water before the world had swung over in its change of poles.

He followed a game trail, saw fresh pig tracks, heard a rustle in the brush. A little darting streak of color rushed across the trail, and Phil flung his spear and missed.

He chuckled.

"Better have used a rope," he said to himself, and went after his spear.

He had not yet reached it when he heard a deep throated grunt behind him, the swift patter of hoofed feet on the trail. He sent a swift glance over his shoulder, and saw a wild boar, little eyes red with fury, curved tusks champing wickedly, charging at him.

Phil made one wild leap for his spear, caught it up, tried to whirl.

The boar was on him before he had a chance to swing the spear around so the sharpened end faced the charging animal. But he did manage to make a swift, vicious thrust with the butt end. The wood caught the animal flush on the tender end of the nose, deflected him in his charge, sent him rushing past, knocking the spear from Phil's hand, throwing Phil off balance.

But he recovered, grabbed at the spear again, waited for the animal to turn.

The boar, however, seemed to have had enough. He swung from the path into the thick foliage and vanished from sight, although the branches continued to sway and crack for some seconds after Phil had lost sight of him.

Phil gripped the handle of his spear, surveyed a skinned knuckle, and grinned.

"Well," he said to himself, "that's the first lesson. Hang on to your weapons."

He took careful marks so that he would have no difficulty in returning to the proper peak when he was ready to come back.

He saw that there were some species of fruits on the trees, and suddenly remembered that he was hungry. The fruit looked edible, and Phil picked a tree which was not so large but what he could climb it, leaned his spear against the bole and started up.

HE reached the top, pulled off some of the fruit that was soft enough to eat, sliced away a

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thick, green skin, and found that the interior was pink, slightly acid, rather sweetish. There were seeds in the interior as in a cantaloupe, and Phil scraped out the seeds, cut away slices of the thick fruit and devoured them eagerly.

But his stomach craved meat, and he realized that it was the part of wisdom to conserve his reserve rations. Therefore, the situation called for a kill of some sort. So he started to slide down the tree.

He had reached a point in the lower branches, some ten feet from the trail, and directly above it, when a very slight motion in the shadows attracted his attention.

He froze into instant immobility.

No one but a woodsman would have seen that flicker of moving shadow within shadow, but Phil had trained his senses until they were as alert as those of a wild animal, and he not only saw the motion, but he sensed the menace of it with some subtle sixth sense. Silently he placed himself on his stomach along the overhanging limb.

A moment later the motion became substance. A dark skinned man, naked save for a breechcloth which was wrapped about his hips and middle, emerged into the sunlight which patched the trail.

CHAPTER VI

Jungle Death

PHIL saw the woolly head, the wide nostrils through which a piece of white bone had been thrust. He saw, also, that the man's eyes were on the ground, that he was following trail, and realized, with a sudden thrill, that the trail he was following was Phil's own shoeprints.

The man carried a bow in his hand, an arrow ready on the string. There was a quiver over his shoulder, and in this quiver were some dozen arrows.

There could be no mistaking the menace of the man's approach. It was the approach of a killer stalking his kill, of a hunter crawling up on his prey.

The bare feet of the savage made no sound upon the trail. His advance was like the advance of a dark cloud sliding across the blue sky, ominous, silent, deadly.

Phil realized the danger to the girl and the scientist. Unversed in woodcraft, they would fall easy prey to such prowling savages. It became imperative for Phil to ascertain whether the man was alone or whether he was but the outpost of a large force, scouting up the slope.

And the quick eyes of the savage would soon see the telltale tracks leading to the tree, the rough spear which was thrust against the bole. Phil had no

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doubt the arrows in the quiver were tipped with a deadly poison.

There was but one thing to do—steal a page from the hunting tactics of the puma. Phil flattened himself on the limb, tensed his muscles.

The native came to the point where the tracks turned. He grunted his surprise, looked up.

Phil dropped from the limb.

But man-made shoes are far inferior to the sharp claws of a mountain lion. Phil's feet, slipping from the smooth bark of the limb, threw him off balance, and made him bungle the noiseless efficiency of his spring.

He came through the air, arms and legs outspread, trying to imitate the lion, but resembling some huge bat. The native, moving with that swift coördination which characterizes those who have lived their lives in the wild, jumped back and flung up his bow.

But Phil didn't miss entirely. His clutching hand caught a tip of the bow as he went down, and jerked it from the hand of the naked savage. And Phil, remembering several occasions when he had been pitched from his saddle by the fall of a horse, managed to get his legs in under him by a convulsive motion of the stomach muscles.

He lit heavily, the bow flying to one side, the arrow flipping from the string.

The savage uttered a yell, and gave a leap forward.

Phil was still off balance.

HE felt the impact of the brown flesh, the sudden tenseness of the iron-hard muscles as the man threw himself upon him, reaching for his throat.

Then Phil managed to get his shoulder under the savage's stomach, got his heel dug into the loamy soil of the trail, and straightened, sending the savage up and off balance.

The man slipped to one side, recovered himself with cat-like quickness, and leapt forward. His teeth had been filed to points, and now, as he leapt, his mouth was open, snarling like an animal. The lips were curled back, and the white of the filed teeth showed as a twin row of menace.

Phil Bregg snapped his right for the jaw.

The gripping hands were almost at his throat when his blow, slipping under the naked, outstretched arm, crashed home on the button of the jaw.

As the blow struck, Phil lowered his shoulder, gave a follow through which sent the savage's head rocking back, lifted him from the heels of his feet, hurtled him through the air, smashed him down upon the dark soil of the tropical forest with a jar that shook the leaves of the trees, dislodged Phil's spear and sent it

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slithering down the side of the tree.

Phil jumped on the savage, wrested the quiver of arrows from his back. As he had expected, he found that the steel tips of the arrows were discolored by some dark substance which was undoubtedly a poisonous preparation.

The savage was unconscious, and seemed likely to remain so for some time. Phil picked up the bow, tested the twang of the string between his thumb and forefinger. The bow was a powerful one.

Phil dragged the native away from the trail, covered the inert form over with some heavy leaves he cut from a low shrub with his pocket knife, retrieved his spear, and slung the quiver of poisoned arrows over his shoulder. Then he strung an arrow on the bow, ambushed himself back of a tree and waited.

If there were more natives coming, Phil wanted to be in a position to attack upon terms which would give him something of a chance, even if it was a slender one.

However, there seemed to be no more savages treading the trail. Phil heaved a sigh of relief. That meant this single native, probably on a hunting expedition, had come across the tracks of Phil's boots in the soil, and had followed them, intent upon gathering a head for his collection, and without bothering to back-track to find out where the man had come from.

Phil stepped out from cover, uncertain as to whether to proceed with his explorations or to return to the camp and make certain that the others were safe.

He finally decided that the savage, upon regaining consciousness, would seek to follow his trail, and knew that if he left a plain trail back to the camp he would simply be bringing danger upon those whom he wished to protect.

SO he started along the trail. He wanted to find a stream of running water. If he could do that, he felt reasonably certain of his ability to shake off the man who would undoubtedly try to follow.

He found the stream in a little cañon between two of the headlands. He turned, as though he were going downstream, and was careful to leave a track on the bank, showing the direction into which he had plunged into the water.

As soon as he was in the stream, however, he reversed his direction and waded up it until he found a rocky ledge upon which he could emerge without leaving any imprint.

He followed this ledge for several hundred yards, then found

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an overhanging tree from the branches of which there hung a green creeper. By taking hold of this creeper he managed to swing far out into the tangled mass of vegetation before he dropped.

He was satisfied that a single man, trying to follow his trail, would be baffled. A party of eight or ten, by dividing on either side of the stream, might be successful, but the lone savage, stalking him unaided, would be at a loss.

Phil fought his way through the dense tangle of vegetation, searching for a game trail by which he might make a more silent progress.

A slow sound, throbbing the air, keeping tempo with the pulse of his blood, suddenly impinged upon his consciousness. He became aware then that he had been hearing this sound for some time without taking conscious thought of it.

Once aware of it, he paused to listen. It was the throbbing of a drum. From the sound, it must be a distant drum, massive, resonant. The sound came from no particular place, seemed no louder in one quarter of the compass than in the others. Yet, the sound was sufficient in volume to dominate the whole island.

It was, he gathered, some master drum which was used to transmit signals. He had heard of such drums, had heard of messages which were transmitted by savage tribes with the speed of telegraphed news.

He tried to take note of the pulsations.

To his ear they seemed to be entirely alike, a monotone of rhythm that came and went, ebbed and flowed, swelled and died.

The drum rose louder and louder in its tone, then began to die away. The notes seemed to possess less volume. Then the beating became so low that it was hard for the senses to tell whether the impulses they detected came from the pound of the heart or the throbbing of the drum.

When Phil had about convinced himself that the sound had ceased entirely, the wind swung a little, and, for a moment, he could hear it again distinctly. Then the breeze ceased to rustle the leaves, and there was no more sound.

HE was about to start forward when he heard another drum. This sound could be located. It was away off to the left. While it was deep in its tone, nevertheless there was not the heavy resonance about it that characterized the beating of that master drum.

More, he sensed at once that this drum was sending some message. There was a rapidity about the strokes, a variation in the periods of pulsation, which was at once apparent.

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He tried to line up the sound accurately, and fancied that he had it pretty well located, when it ceased abruptly.

Phil listened.

The silence of the tropical jungle hemmed him in.

Then he heard something else, a rapid pound, pound, pound, that seemed to jar the earth. He crouched down in the shadows, and waited. The pounding grew louder, kept the same rhythm. A dark shape, moving through the trees, became visible.

Phil saw it was a savage, naked except for the loin cloth, and that the man was running down some established trail. The sound of his bare feet thudding on the ground was the noise that Phil had heard, some little time before he glimpsed the runner, and that thudding of the feet continued some little time after the naked savage had vanished in the jungle growth.

Phil waited, aware now that he must move with caution. He was on an island that was peopled with a savage and warlike tribe. He had no weapons worthy of the name, no means of escape. And he had the responsibility of caring for two people, both of whom were utterly helpless as far as any actual ability to care for themselves against any such obstacles.

Phil decided that he would work his way back to the camp, taking care not to leave a trail that could be followed, warning the two that they must take no chances of showing themselves, getting them, perhaps, in a better place of concealment.

He started through the brush, realizing that the trail which the native had followed was but a short distance below him. Evidently that trail had crossed downstream, then zigzagged up on the side of the stream he had crossed.

He had not taken more than a single step when he heard the smaller drum again, volleying forth a message, and almost at once the big master drum started its deep throated booming.

Phil, standing there, perspiring, alarmed, every sense alert, could not be certain, but he felt that the big drum was relaying the same message that had been received by the smaller drum, sending it booming forth to every part of the island.

For there could be no question now but what the big drum was conveying a message. The change in tempo of the throbbing sounds could be readily perceived.

Suddenly the noise of a rifle shot cracked out, and it was followed almost at once by two more shots.

The noise of the reports drowned out the sound of the drums as they echoed from crag to crag.

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Then, after the noise of the shots had died away, there sounded the noise of the big drum again, booming forth a series of repeated signals. There were three rapid beats, a delayed moment, then two slow beats, a pause, and then one single booming beat of noise. Following that was silence, a silence which lasted for several seconds. Then the big drum repeated the signal.

PHIL listened to the repetition of that signal for several minutes, and came to the conclusion, without having any evidence to base it on, other than the fact that the smaller drum was silenced, that the big drum was booming forth something in the nature of a call signal, waiting for a reply from the smaller drum.

Phil decided that the girl and Professor Parker could hear the signal of the master drum, which was booming in increased volume with every repetition.

And Phil felt certain that the warning conveyed by that drummed signal would be sufficient to apprise the girl of the presence of hostile savages, and that she would use every precaution to insure against discovery.

The savage he had found had been armed only with bow and arrow. The sound of the rifle shot indicated the presence of a more civilized man, and it was very possible that some other white man, better armed, had been caught by the same tidal currents which followed the shifting of the poles of the earth, and that those currents had deposited him upon the same island.

Phil changed his plans, determined to make his way toward the place from which he had heard those rifle shots, particularly as they had seemed to be almost in the same locality as the source of the drum beats from the smaller drum.

Phil had an idea speed meant everything. He cast caution to the winds, broke from his concealment, found the trail the running savage had been following, and set out along it with swinging stride that devoured distance.

But Phil was taking care lest he should run into an ambush, and his trail-wise eyes took in every detail of his surroundings.

The trail was beaten hard by naked feet. It wound like a black ribbon through the dense growth of tree and shrub, vine and creeper, following the contours of the upper levels with a slope that showed some considerable engineering efficiency in its construction, an efficiency which is the result of laborious study in civilized schools, yet which comes instinctively to game animals and savages.

Phil dropped down a gully, following the trail, saw where a

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branch trail turned into the shrub on a shoulder of the next ridge, and decided to follow that branch trail. He was, he realized, getting close to the place from which that shot had sounded.

He slowed his pace, moved with every sense alert.

It was the sight of a brown foot protruding into a patch of sunlight which sent him jumping into the shrubbery beside the trail, the bow raised, arrow on the string.

But the foot remained motionless, the toes pointing upward.

Phil stepped forward, silently, cautiously.

The foot was motionless. As he walked, a leg came into view above the foot, then another foot and leg, the latter twisted into a grotesque position.

Then, rounding a tree trunk, he saw the man.

CHAPTER VII

The Murderer

HE knew, then, the target that had received those rifle bullets. The man had been struck in the back, a little to one side of the right shoulder blade. The bullet had ranged through the chest, emerging from the left side. Death had been instantaneous, and the heavy drum stick, padded with a ball of animal hide which the fingers of the right hand still held, told the story.

There was a huge drum suspended from the branches of the tree by a twisted grass rope. The drum was made from a section of a hollowed tree trunk, and the hide which stretched across it was apparently exceedingly heavy. Phil found himself wondering if it could be a strip of elephant hide.

The drummer was dressed as the others had been dressed, simply in a loin cloth. But there was no ivory ornament thrust through his nose, although the skin of the chest showed a species of tattooing.

Phil stepped around the body, mindful of the presence of the man with the rifle, mindful, also, of the fact that the savage had been shot down without warning, and in the back.

The possibility that the man who had fired that rifle shot would be a friend and ally became more remote as Phil reconstructed the scene of the shooting.

The drummer had been standing before the drum, in the very act of beating the resonant hide. Then had come the shot, and the force of the bullet had hurled him to one side, sprawled him in the position in which he now lay.

But how about the other shots?

Obviously this man had been taken completely by surprise. That meant that he had not received any warning of the pres-

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ence of his slayer until the bullet had crashed him down into death.

He must, then, have been killed with the first shot.

Phil looked around, and suddenly recoiled with horror.

He had found the mark of those other bullets!

She was a slip of a girl, hardly more than nineteen or twenty. She, too, was attired in nothing save a loin cloth, and even in death the beauty of her figure was apparent. Sprawled as she was upon the leaves of the forest, her body disfigured by two bullet holes, she remained beautiful with that grace which is the property of youth alone.

She had been running, Phil decided, when the shots had brought her down.

Evidently she had been standing beside the man when he had been beating the drum. The first shot had killed the man, sent her into headlong flight. And Phil, reconstructing the scene, remembered the short interval between the first shot and the following shots, realized that she had covered quite a bit of space in that brief interval.

A sudden rage possessed Phil Bregg. Whether these people were hostile or not, the man who had fired those shots, be he native American or European, was a coward and a murderer.

By picking the angles of the bullets from the positions of the bodies, Phil was able to determine almost exactly the spot from which the shots must have been fired.

IT was a little ridge, some fifty yards away, to which there was a cleared path in the jungle. It was obvious that the man who did the shooting must have been on this ridge, equally obvious that he was not there any longer, or, if there, that he was making no display of hostility, since Phil had been in plain sight of the point when he had walked up to the body of the drummer.

Phil walked boldly along the cleared space, straight to the ridge. There was no one in sight when he arrived at the ridge, although there remained ample evidence that a man had been there.

There was a burned match, the glittering gleam of three empty rifle shells, lying where the ejector of the reapeating rifle had thrown them. There was, on a closer inspection, a little pile of dark ash which smelled strongly of stale tobacco. The man evidently smoked a pipe, and had scraped out the bowl of its dead residue before refilling it with fresh tobacco.

Phil checked the trail, and found the track of shoes. He got to hands and knees and surveyed the ground. He found a few grains of fresh brown tobacco,

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still pleasantly fragrant and moist.

The man had evidently refilled his pipe after the shooting, and the burned match indicated that he had lit his pipe. Phil was armed only with a bow and arrow, a rude, home-made spear. He sensed that this man would be hostile, a cold blooded murderer.

Reflecting upon his predicament, Phil realized he was between the devil and the deep sea. The island swarmed with savages. There was a man somewhere ahead who was a murderer. But, at least, he might be prevailed upon to give shelter to his own kind, and he evidently possessed but little fear as to his own safety.

Phil took up the trail, moving cautiously.

The ground was too hard to leave him any footprints other than an occasional heel mark.

Phil sniffed the air.

He thought he detected the odor of tobacco smoke, and pushed forward more rapidly.

The odor of burning tobacco became stronger, held the unmistakable tang of a pipe about it. The trail Phil followed grew broader, another trail intersected it, and Phil became conscious of a blue cloud of smoke drifting through the branches of some trees a hundred yards away.

He moved cautiously, convinced himself the smoke came from pipe tobacco, burning fragrantly. Its very volume caused Phil some misgivings. But, he reflected, the man might well be smoking some gourd pipe which held an enormous quantity of tobacco.

He worked his way cautiously toward the eddies of smoke which filtered through the trees.

He left the trail, moved through the forest like a wild animal, keeping to the open spaces so as to avoid rustling branches or breaking twigs.

He pushed through a light tangle of bush, paused behind the trunk of a tree, saw that the poisoned arrow was on the string of the bow, and then slipped out into the open.

He noticed the eddying blue of the tobacco smoke, and knew at once that he had been trapped.

For the smoke eddied from no pipe held in the lips of a man, but came, instead from a rock where a little pile of tobacco had been stacked so that the burning base sent wisps of smoke from the grains of tobacco that had been piled on top of the red-hot grains underneath.

The man he hunted had, then, cunningly arranged this trap, so that any one trailing would come sneaking up on the smoke. Phil knew the answer at once, even before hearing the cracked laugh.

He looked up, in the direction of that laugh.

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HE saw gleaming eyes, loose lips, teeth that were stained, a face that was covered with stubble, the shoulders and left sleeve of a coat that had once been white, and the black muzzle of a rifle, the latter trained directly upon his heart.

"Well, well," cackled the man, "look what walked into my little trap!"

Phil stepped forward, boldly.

"I hoped I'd find you. You seem to have means of taking care of yourself, and I seem to be on a hostile island."

The rifle covered him.

"I wouldn't come no farther, and I think I'd drop that bow!" said the man.

Phil relaxed his grip, let the bow drop to the ground, shook the quiver from his shoulder, let it clatter to the ground, and then gave the man with the beady eyes his best grin.

"Captured it from a native," said Phil, trying to speak easily, frankly.

The man with the rifle laughed.

"That tobacco sure smells good," went on Phil, "got any more of it?"

And he took a step forward.

"That's far enough," rasped the voice. "Get back there! Get back there, damn you, or I'll shoot you just as I would a native!"

The eyes glittered, the loose lips lost their grin, and the face became a mask of menace. Phil realized the fact that the man's trigger finger was about to tighten, and he jumped back.

For a second or two there was stark hatred, the desire to murder, a red blood lust in the eyes of the man. Then the face slowly relaxed.

"Come alone to the island?" asked the man.

Phil nodded casually.

"Yeah," he said, "I got shipwrecked."

The man laughed again.

"Don't lie," he said. "I know everything that goes on here on the island. There's three in your party, and one of 'em's a damned pretty woman. I want that woman."

Phil felt the red blood of rage mounting his forehead. He forgot discretion, forgot the fact that the other held him covered.

"Well, you're frank about it," he said. "That's about the way I had you figured, at that. Now try and find her, you cowardly murderer!"

BUT the words seemed to have no effect other than to arouse a certain amusement in the man who held the rifle.

He chuckled, and the chuckle was rasping, and unclean.

"Gettin' independent, ain't you? Well now, my friend, let me tell you something. I can control these natives because they fear me. I've held the whip

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hand over 'em all the time, and I'm ruthless.

"I've got a house around the corner of the trail that's a regular castle. I built it before the natives got hostile. Afterwards they got independent, and I had to kill off a couple. That brought about a showdown. They tried to attack me.

"When I got finished with 'em they were good dogs. I've kept other white men off this island, and there isn't a firearm on it except what I've got. I've got plenty.

"That's the way I keep the natives in line. They can't reach me, but I can kill them off whenever I want to, and I give 'em orders, rule 'em with an iron hand.

"I told 'em not to beat that drum down there. It disturbs my sleep when I'm taking a nap. They laid off for a while, but today they violated my orders, so I went down there and put a little of the fear of God into 'em.

"And I figured some of them might come trailing me, so I set a little trap for 'em. I hadn't figured you'd walk into it. That's the way to deal with these natives, kill off a couple of 'em every so often, then when they get all worked up and start after me, I set a little trap and kill off a couple more. Then I go and live in my castle for a while until they come to their senses."

Phil remained expressionless.

"Well," he said, "how about us, what are you going to do with us, give us shelter?"

The man laughed.

"I'll give you shelter, in a savage's belly! I'm the one that encouraged 'em in cannibalism. They did it on the sly until I came here. I got 'em in the belief that it was a good thing, to come right out in the open and do it.

"I should kill you right now, but I'd rather leave you to wander around and play hide and seek with the natives. That'll keep their mind off of me for a while, and they need something like that to divert their attention from the little disciplining I gave them.

"Don't let 'em capture you alive if you know what's good for you. They've got pleasant little methods of torture. They say the flesh tastes better when it's about half cooked while a man's still alive.

"I'm goin' to be moving on. Put up the best fight you can. They'll get you in the long run. They always do get 'em. There was a ship came ashore here a couple of months ago. Funny weather. Funny the last couple of days, too. The damned island settled a bit, or the ocean raised, I don't know which it was, big tidal waves and everything. Guess that was what brought you in. Oh, well, it's a high island, and it's been here for a while, and it'll be here for a while again.

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"The natives'll turn over the woman to me. I've got 'em sold on the idea it's bad medicine to eat a white woman—clever, eh?"

And the man got to his feet, disclosing a giant figure, unkempt, dirty, yet radiating ruthless power and brute strength.

"You stay right here for five minutes. You move up on this ridge before then, and I'll save the savages a job. After that five minutes is up you can go anywhere you damned please.

"Watch out for their arrows. They're tipped with a funny kind o' poison. It'll numb the nerves and paralyze you for a while, but it won't kill you. You'll come to after an hour or two—ready to be cooked on the hoof.

"They've got a big bed o' coals, and they truss you up and broil you a bit at a time over the slow fire. Don't know where so many men get the idea cannibals boil 'em in a kettle. They don't. They broil 'em. Tastes best that way.

"So long!"

And the man abruptly stepped down from back of the ridge.

CHAPTER VIII

Captives

PHIL failed to heed the warning about remaining where he was, but he knew better than to charge up the ridge. Instead, he tried to estimate the probable direction in which the man was traveling, and struck off into the forest, making a wide semicircle.

He fought his way through thick growth, came to a more open ridge, and streaked up it. He knew he must hurry if he stood any chance.

In the end he missed out by the matter of a few seconds.

He felt that the tall man would turn frequently to watch his back trail, that this would slow down his progress, and that there was a chance to ambush him by leaping from the bush on the side of the trail.

But he saw the shadow of the other's long-limbed progress slipping by up the ridge while he was still ten feet away, and he knew that it would be sheer suicide to charge through the tangled shrubbery.

So he remained motionless, watched the other stride by on the trail above. Then Phil slipped up to the trail.

The man was covering the ground with great strides. Phil watched him travel saw, almost at once, his destination. It was a castle which had been built on a ridge of rock, a castle which was impregnable to anything except an attack by artillery.

The construction was of a cobbled concrete that made the structure gleam white in the sunlight. It was built on the top of the ridge, at the very apex of a massive outcropping of native rock.

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There was but one place by which the castle could be reached and that place had a barred gate with a huge lock which stood out even at the distance from which Phil was observing it.

A wall ran around the castle, a wall that was surmounted with jagged coral and broken glass. The rock dropped away on all sides in a sheer slope that was smoothed over by the aid of concrete so that its sides were as glass. The trail ran up the winding zigzag, passed under the barred gate, and came to another gate, a mere opening in the wall.

Gunpowder might have reduced the fortress, but as far as the simple savages were concerned, armed as they were only with crude weapons, it represented an absolutely impregnable retreat.

Now that Phil knew the truth about the people who inhabited the island, he realized the gravity of the position in which he had left his companions, knew that it was vitally necessary that they be warned.

He slid down the slope of the ridge, picked up the landmarks which gave him the location of the shelf of rock where he had left Stella Ronson and Professor Parker, and plunged into the dense shrubbery.

When he finally arrived at the bottom of the ridge where he had left his party, he gave a low whistle once, then again.

There was no answer.

FEARING the worst, he started the laborious ascent, up the rock slope which led to the shelf where he had established camp.

He slipped around the screen of a bush, and came upon that which he had feared. The camp was in a state of confused disorder. There was no sign, either of the professor or the girl, save a torn bit of cloth which had come from the girl's skirt.

Phil knew much of woodcraft, and he had trailed packhorses over long and difficult stretches of country. Now he set himself the task of trailing the raiding party which had captured his companions.

It was absurdly easy. The trail led up the slope and around a shoulder, where a broad, well used trail led along a ledge of rock below which flashed the blue of the ocean.

Looking along this rocky ledge, down toward the ocean, Phil could see what appeared to be a gigantic serpent, writhing along the rocky trail. It was, in fact, a long line of men, naked, excited, walking in single file along the narrow trail, and in the center of this writhing line of brown backs and black heads appeared the light colors of the clothes worn by Parker and Stella.

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Phil left the trail and kept to the ridge, keeping just below the skyline. He worked his way along until he could see the party below him enter a dense clump of trees. They did not emerge.

Closer inspection showed Phil the tops of thatched houses showing dimly through the trees. He knew that something had to be done, and done fast, but he was alone and virtually unarmed.

Then he thought of the strange hermit, of the gun which the hermit had held, of the big automatic which was strapped to the cartridge belt which circled the hermit's waist.

Phil had to get those weapons. How?

As he stood there thinking, the natives themselves furnished him with an idea. They started throbbing out a message on the big master drum.

Phil could make out the drum now, and the drummer. The drum was made of wood, and a huge savage swung a mallet as one would swing a sledge. The resonant wood boomed out its deep note, a series of signal calls.

Phil crawled on his stomach, slipping over the skyline of the ridge. Once he had passed the skyline he got to his feet, slipped down the slope until he came to the trail he had followed earlier in the day, and raced along at top speed.

At the forks in the trail he flung himself blindly forward, half expecting to see some hostile native arise in front of him. But things were as he had left them when he had started to trail the killer. The two natives were sprawled out, stark in death. The big drum still hung from the tree.

Phil inspected that drum closely.

It was suspended by a long rope, and there was a sufficient surplus of rope to answer Phil's purpose.

He picked up the drumstick, swung it in a powerful blow, squarely upon the head of the drum. The booming note resounded over the island. Phil, trying to remember the sound sequence of the drumming he had previously heard, repeated the blows, imitating the first signals which had been given by the savage as nearly as possible.

He swung the drumstick for a full five minutes. Then he picked up a native spear which lay near the dead warrior, planted it in the ground, fastened a springy branch to it, tied the drumstick to the branch, and raced up the trail to a place from which he could see the castle.

He found that his ruse was working.

THE owner of the place, armed to the teeth, probably seething with indignation, was coming down the steep trail from the cas-

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tle with long strides, his rifle thrust forward.

Phil timed his approach, then ran back to the drum, gave a few more beats and started twisting the ropes which held the drum. When he had them twisted tightly, he adjusted the spear at just the proper angle, affixed the drumstick and springy bow in place, and let the drum go.

The untwisting ropes swung the drum in a half circle, brought the head against the drumstick. There came a low, abortive, yet plainly audible sound from the drum, which was arrested in its progress. Then the spring of the limb slowly let the drum head slide past the stick, and the drum made another revolution, again hitting the drumstick.

It was a makeshift device, good only for a matter of a few revolutions, but it served Phil's purpose.

He ran back up the trail, plunged into the brush by the side of the divide just in time. He could see the long legs of his man coming on the run.

The drum continued at intervals to send forth low noises far different from the deep booming that had come from it when it had been struck a smart blow with the padded striker, yet it was plainly audible.

And, over all, there sounded the deep booming of the master drum.

But the long legged giant, striding up with murder in his mind, was not a simple, trusting soul to be caught in a trap unaware. Evidently natives had tried to ambush him before, and he slowed his progress to peer cautiously into the brush when he entered the region where the undergrowth was thick enough to furnish cover.

Phil knew that it would only be a matter of seconds before the drum would cease to give forth sound, due to the relaxing of tension on the rope.

He tensed his muscles, finally determined on a rush. The man was peering cautiously and intently into the shadows. A rush seemed suicide, yet Phil could think of no other way.

He worked his feet firmly in under him, and the drum gave forth a low moaning sound, due to the rubbing of the hide covered head of the striker, rubbing against the drum head, just as he was preparing to rush.

That peculiar sound aroused the curiosity of the long legged ruler of the island sufficiently to overcome his prudence. He started forward.

Phil charged.

The man was unbelievably quick. Yet Phil had anticipated that quickness. He jumped to one side, flung the rifle around and fired all with one motion.

The bullet missed. Phil felt the

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fan of its breath against his cheek.

He flung himself forward, head down.

The gravel scratched his hands and chin. There was a cloud of loa...y soil, twigs and decayed foliage thrown up. And the maneuver surprised the man with the rifle, for the second shot missed.

Then Phil's hands gripped the ankles, he flung himself up and around. The man swung the clubbed rifle. The blow caught Phil upon the shoulder, numbing him with sickening pain, but he hung on.

HIS adversary dropped the gun with an oath, and Phil knew that he was reaching for the automatic at his belt. Phil flung up his right hand, hooked the fingers in the belt, yanked as hard as he could, striving to get to his feet.

The tension on the belt had an unexpected result. The buckle gave way, and belt and gun thudded to the earth. The big man swung his right foot back for a kick at Phil's face, and Phil, pushing forward while the man was standing on one leg, threw him off balance.

That gave Phil a chance to get to his feet.

They faced each other unarmed.

The long armed man swung over a terriffic blow. Phil ducked it and planted a swift right smash to the stomach, and had the satisfaction of hearing the tall man give a grunt of pain.

He pressed his advantage, swinging a left, right, left.

Then the long arms closed on him. But Phil knew something of wrestling, and sensed that the other was punch groggy. He broke the hold, flung him away, and set for the delivery of the final smashing blow that would end the conflict.

The tall man swung wildly, awkwardly. Phil stepped forward, easily assured of victory now. He needed but to walk inside of the swing, slam home his right, and . . .

His foot slipped on a round pebble. He lurched, back, off balance, directly in the path of that vicious swing.

He tried to dodge, made a frantic but futile effort to block the blow with his elbow. But he was falling, the fist crashed into the side of his jaw, and he saw a great flash of light, then streaking ribbons of black, then felt himself falling into black oblivion.

He fought with himself to keep his senses, to get his eyes open and his vision cleared.

He managed to open his eyes, but all he could see was a confused blur of dancing tree-tops against the blue of the sky. Then he saw something else, a weird

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figure which swung about between him and the tree-tops. Gradually that figure took form and substance. It was the long legged man, once more in possession of the rifle, although still punch drunk, swinging the clubbed weapon in a blow that would undoubtedly brain the prostrate cowpuncher.

Phil saw the rifle swinging down, gave every ounce of will power he possessed into a last desperate attempt at rolling to one side.

He rolled, flung out his hand. He could hear the whooshing whistle of the rifle butt as it just grazed his head. Then his hand, outflung, touched a hard object.

His senses were clearing rapidly. He knew at once that his hand rested on the automatic.

Phil rolled over and over, clutching the belt, holster and gun in his hand.

He knew the other would fire, was raising the gun.

He jerked the weapon from its holster.

The rifle roared.

Phil scrambled to his hands and knees, his face stung by the flying particles of dirt, thrown up by that rifle shot.

"Drop it!" he yelled.

The man tried for another shot. Phil fired twice, and the bullets, plowing their way along the side of the gun stock, slammed into the right hand of the man who held it, ripping away the trigger finger, smashing bones.

With a howl of pain, he dropped the gun.

"Turn around," said Phil.

The man hesitated, then turned.

"Put your hands back of you."

The command was obeyed.

CHAPTER IX

The New World

PHIL pulled the man's coat off, ripped it into shreds, bound the wound.

"Now," he said, "you're going to march straight to that native village, and instruct the chief to turn over the captives he's taken into your charge. You'll keep out of sight when you make the command, and I'll have the guns trained right on your back. If anything goes wrong you'll be the first to go."

"I can't walk. That bullet's smashed my hand all to pieces, made me sick all over."

Phil prodded him menacingly.

"You asked for it," he said. "You've done a lot of killing in your time, and showed little mercy for the ones that were on the receiving end of your guns. Now get started, or I'm going to put you out of the way right here."

He started to walk.

"Untie my hands so I can keep my balance," he said.

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Phil jabbed him in the back with the business end of the rifle he had confiscated.

"Don't talk, walk," he ordered.

The man immediately lengthened his stride.

"Any treachery, and you get shot. If they're killed before we arrive, you get shot. So remember that you're going to be the one who determines your fate!" snapped Phil.

They swung into a trail which ran to the right, dropped down a steep slope. The trail widened, and other trails came feeding into it. The sound of the drum grew louder.

A watcher jumped out into the trail, snapped his bow up. The tall man with the bound arms called out something to him in a guttural tongue and the native dropped the bow, turned and ran at top speed.

The tall man lengthened his stride.

The sound of the big drum ceased. There sounded the rattle of voices clamoring a chorus of sudden panic. Phil gathered that the watchman had warned them of the approach of the man who carried thundering death with him.

"Stop here," said Phil's captive.

Phil held the gun ready, cocked.

"Remember," he said, "the first sign of treachery, and you get your backbone blown to splinters."

"Hell," snorted the tall one, "I ain't a fool."

He raised his voice in a sharp call.

Instantly the chattering sound of the many voices which came from beyond the screen of trees subsided.

THE tall man called a few sharp commands in the strange tongue. He was answered by some one from beyond the screen of foliage, and then raised his voice again, this time giving harsh rasping orders which thundered down the leafy aisles.

There was a period of silence.

"It's a damn fool thing, coming into the village," he muttered to Phil. "They ain't found the dead drummer yet. If they had, they'd be mad enough to rush me. As it is, I've run a bluff, and told 'em I'd kill their king if they didn't send out two men with the man and the woman they've captured. I left orders for all the rest of 'em to get down on the ground and lie on their faces.

"But they'll make trouble before we get away. They've been wanting me for a long while. They're frightened now, but they'll try to cut off our escape when we start back . . ."

There was a bit of motion ahead, then Phil saw two natives, so frightened their knees wob-

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bled, bringing the two captives along the trail.

"Tell the natives to go back," said Phil.

And his captive obediently rattled forth another order.

Then Phil raised his own voice, called to the girl.

"It's okay," he said. "Come on the run!"

She gave a glad cry, started to run. Professor Parker joined her, his face wreathing with smiles.

"Well done," he said; "that was a masterly—"

The tall captive rasped forth an oath.

"Never mind that stuff. Get back quick. They'll be trying to ambush us! Save your breath for running. Let's go."

They ran on in silence, their feet beating the trail in rhythm. Behind them all was silence.

The moist air of the jungle growth seemed heavy and oppressive. The trail was steep, and the man in front stumbled twice, finally stopped.

"I've got to have my hands free," he panted.

Phil stepped forward. "I'll just get the keys to your castle," he said. "Then you won't feel so anxious to run off and leave us."

Phil searched the pockets, found the keys, unbound the man's hands.

"Keep well ahead and in the trail," he warned.

The man laughed grimly, pointed back around the shoulder of rock.

"Look at 'em," he said. "Trying to get ahead of us and ambush us."

Phil looked.

THERE, winding up the face of the cliff, was a swarming horde of naked men, armed with bow and arrow and spear, climbing in swift silence, some six hundred yards away.

They were making an almost miraculous speed up the sheer slope of the rock.

Phil flung up the rifle, fired.

The bullet hit the rock directly in front of the leader, flinging up a cloud of dust and stinging splinters of rock.

Phil slammed the lever of the gun, fired again and again.

The savages flung themselves down behind whatever meager shelter they could secure. Phil waited until one raised a cautious torso, got to his feet, started to climb again, and then fired. The bullet slammed from the rock, making a little geyser of stone dust. The savage hurled himself back and down behind his shelter.

"Man," said Phil's captive, "that's shooting!"

Phil motioned.

"Get started," he said.

The tall man shook his head.

"Look at 'em, over on the other side. They'll head us off!"

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So natural was he, so genuine did his consternation appear, that Phil swung about, half raised the rifle.

He heard a warning shout from the girl, the swift rustle of menacing motion, and the big man came down on him like a swooping hawk.

The spring had been well timed. Phil was downhill from his assailant, and the force of the rush brought him down to his knees. The man's wounded hand seemed to check him not at all. His hands clasped about the rifle.

Phil felt the impetus of the other's charge wresting the rifle from his grip. He suddenly loosed his grip on it, dropped to his knees, shook off the other man.

That individual, possessed of the rifle, let forth a roar of rage and swung the muzzle, only to find Phil, still on his knees, the butt of the automatic in his hand, eyes glittering, tense and ready.

"Drop it!" he yelled.

The tall man hesitated, and in that instant of hesitation there sounded the sharp *twang* of a bowstring. Something flashed through the air in a whispering path of hissing menace, struck the man squarely between the shoulders. With a thudding sound the arrow arrested its progress, quivered there in the man's back.

Phil snapped his automatic around, fired into the jungle growth in the general direction from which the arrow had come. The report of the weapon rang out on the hot air, subsided with a volley of echoes.

There came the sound of running steps, a crashing of brush, and silence.

The tall man dropped the rifle, swayed. His eyes were already glazing. The snarl came to his lips. He tried to curse, and his voice failed him. He wobbled, tottered, crashed to the earth.

Phil grabbed the gun. "No time for sentiment, folks. Let's go while we can."

And he led the way, setting a swift pace along the trail.

FROM the high divide, with the castle well within reach, and a downhill trail to follow, he called a halt, looked back.

The savage band had once more gone into motion. Here and there, through breaks in the foliage, could be seen the moving flash of dark skin as some runner pressed ahead of his mates up the trail.

Then came a wild shout from the place where the tall man had fallen. The shout was taken up, became words, was hurled back down the trail from screaming throat to screaming throat, a wailing cry of savage exultation.

Then the big drum began to boom forth some code message.

Phil nodded.

"They've found him. He was the one they wanted. I imagine

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we won't be bothered now if we move fast."

And move fast they did.

It was only after Phil had fitted the keys to the iron gate, heard the welcome click of the lock, that he felt safe. He ushered the others into the gate, closed and locked it, went through the smaller gate, and surveyed the domain to which he had taken title by right of conquest.

There was a massive patio to the rear, a plateau which ran out over the outcropping of rock, surrounded by the smooth sides of the wall. On this plateau were trees and vines. There was a very commodious house, furnished with hand carpentered furniture. The whole thing was an impregnable fortress, well equipped with guns and ammunition.

Phil climbed to the roof, looked out over the ocean.

Suddenly he let out a yell. Around a jutting promontory of the island appeared the white bow of a huge boat, cutting through the water at cautious half speed.

Phil's shout attracted the others.

They crowded to him. Watched in silence as the length of the boat came into view.

She was a large passenger steamer, and she had been battered by mountainous seas, yet had won through. Her lifeboats were either carried away or were stove in by the high seas. She had a tangle of wreckage on her boat deck, and more wreckage on the bow of the main deck, but she was cutting through the water slowly, majestically.

Professor Parker nodded.

"We could have expected it," he said. "Most of the larger boats that were afloat when the world swung over were undoubtedly turned topsy turvy by the terrific waves. You will remember that our own craft rolled over and over. But it righted itself because it was small and buoyant. Big boats, once over, would never right themselves, but would go down.

"But somewhere there were undoubtedly boats that weathered it.

"While the catastrophe was world-wide, it is certain that some sections were spared, just as this island was spared. And the terrific current swept most of the north sea shipping down to this vicinity. It is almost exactly what I expected to find, this boat, and —"

But Phil was not listening to explanations. There was a flag in a flag locker on the top of the castle. Grabbing it out, he tied one corner to the halyard, raised it and lowered it along the stumpy, homemade flagpole.

There came a cloud of steam from the whistle of the boat. The

(*continued on page 124*)

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By RON GOULART

Illustrator SUMMERS

JUNIOR PARTNER

Not many businesses run on timeclocks, anymore.

People dont like to punch in and out.

It's undignified. Much better if somebody just dusts

you with orange powder and puts you in a desk drawer.

SOMETIMES the street lights come on at six o'clock and sometimes not until nearly eight. Tonight they've come on at 7:35. Eventually I'll have to leave here. I've never really liked my father's office. I don't like it now that it's mine. I can't leave through the outer offices. I can't do that. And the fire escape is attached to the next office over. There's a ledge but it's four stories to the ground and I have a pretty strong fear of heights. That was one of the failings of mine that my father never tired of pointing out.

He's been dead nearly a month now. There aren't any pictures of him here. His vanity didn't run to the pictorial. Still, I can feel him all over this big damn room. The lousy spears and masks and all the other crap he acquired on his vacations. His vacation always came in July and August. Two months away and always back in time to send me off to whatever new school he'd picked.

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Once when I was fourteen I came across one of his catalogues of military academies and there was a pin hole next to the name of the school I was going to that year. As though he'd just flipped the book open and stuck a pin with his eyes closed and that was why I was going to school in Arizona. But then I figured he'd done that just to get at me. I realized he wouldn't leave something like the directing of my life up to chance. April fool pranks were always in season with him.

My father was five feet six inches tall. He always gave his height in inches, though. Sixty six inches. He'd lost all his hair in his early twenties, during the period when he was bumming around Arabia or someplace and screwing the people out of whatever it was they had to be screwed out of. He and my mother separated when I was only a few months old and he kept me.

My mother died when I was eighteen. I don't remember what she looked like and I've never seen a picture of her. My father never mentioned her. I knew she'd died because there were small stories in all the San Francisco papers here. She died in Connecticut. In Westport. There were four papers here in those days I think. That was before the war. I'm nearly forty now.

THERE'S a birthdate on my records but I've never really been sure it's right. Although my father may have been using some kind of purloined letter psychology on me and let me have the real facts. I know I've never really believed him or trusted him from the time I was four or five. As far back as then I have always tried to check him up and prove him wrong. In Elko, Nevada, where I was supposed to have been born, they had no record of it at the city hall. My father and mother did live there in the early twenties, that I found out from old city directories.

It was probably a good thing he kept me scattered across the country. If I'd been here in San Francisco I would have spent all my time checking in the things he'd told me. I found that by the time I got to college I was an expert in research.

After I got out of the army after the war I wanted to get a teaching position at some small junior college outside of California. But somehow I ended up here. I started off as promotion manager of Arlen Keever Enterprises. That's my father. Arlen Keever, Sr. I, of course, am junior.

Every morning sharp at 8:45 all our employees showed up. Only once, the time Hollis fell off the cable car and broke his leg,

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was anyone ever late. Our employees, roughly 150 of them, split their lunches up. Half of them went from 12 to 12:45, the rest from 1 to 1:45. According to my father, only female employees are entitled to a coffee break, under the law. So every morning at 10:05 half the girls went to coffee. At 10:25 they came back. The rest went to coffee at 10:30 and came back at 10:50. A similar schedule held for the afternoon break.

That's how things ran until my father fell down dead right under the Haitian drums on the wall over there. Since I've assumed the running of Keever Enterprises we've been operating in what my father would have called a slipshod and haphazard manner.

As far as I can tell, and I know how to make an impressive variety of charts and graphs to check this sort of thing, our efficiency and production haven't dropped off since my father's methods stopped being used.

ABOUT five weeks ago, when he began to realize he was dying, my father explained his system to me in detail. I'd heard his rules and maxims as far back as I can remember. I'm sure he circled my crib and ran off some of his chats on virtue, punctuality, thrift and the rest. But the system was new to me.

Being a junior partner in Keever Enterprises I was allowed a full hour for lunch. When I came back that particular day there was a memo on my desk from my father.

"Junior," it said, "As soon as you straggle back from lunch please come and ask Miss Spaulding if you can see me. I have some urgent business I want to chat with you about. If you have been drinking please take one of the mints I've left on your desk, which could stand a good re-organization by the way."

There were two white after-dinner mints sitting next to my In box. The only other thing on the desk top was a file of letters I'd been going through. I put it in a file drawer and, dusting the desk top with my handkerchief, went out to Miss Spaulding's desk.

My father was free and after Miss Spaulding smiled and tilted her head at his door I went up to it and knocked. My knock was two short, three long.

"Enter, enter," called my father.

I did. "You wanted to see me, sir."

"That's right, junior. You figured my memorandum out perfectly. You're getting to be almost efficient. How's your wife?"

I've been divorced for over a year. "I don't hear from her. I

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send the alimony checks to her bank and that's it."

"I'm not in very good shape," he said.

I'd suspected something might be wrong with him. He wasn't circling his desk, just sitting back in his swivel chair, his hands folded in his lap. "What is it?" I asked him.

"I've talked to Dr. Weiner and he says it's my old time piece."

My father rarely referred directly to any part of the body. "Your heart?"

"What the heck else would I mean." He pulled a cigar out of the black cigar humidor and screwed the lid back on. "I have a hunch I may be passing along beyond soon, junior."

I felt an odd pain across my chest. "You're not serious?"

"Do I have a reputation for sick humor?" His face wrinkled up. "Yes, I'm serious."

"But you can take it easy. Rest. Go to the desert. People do things like that," I said. "And it adds years to your life."

"Fiddle," he said. "Isn't your real concern over whether or not you can step into my boots and do the job. You don't care if I'm here or over in glory playing in the angel band. Do you?"

"Of course, I care, sir." I began to wonder if this was another one of his games.

"Your grandfather was a professional wrestler before he went into the cattle business," he said, slowly pushing himself back from his desk. "I've seen your grandmother bulldog a steer unaided. Does that suggest anything to you?"

"They must have had some great family quarrels."

HE gave a strong push and was free of his desk and chair and standing. "Your ancestors were tough, courageous people. Pioneer types. You know that one of our family was a close friend of Robert Burns. And poets weren't pansies in those days."

"I know, sir."

"It's time, junior," said my father, getting his hands locked behind him, "that you start giving a hand to heredity. When I've moved on I want you to run the show here, mind the store while your pop's out on the road."

I had a feeling he might be serious. He never called himself my pop unless he was in a straight mood. I said, "You don't have to talk like this, sir. I'm sure you'll live a long time."

"With a bum ticker? Like heck I will." He was at one of the wall safes. The one behind the African mask on the far wall. "You'll have to memorize the combinations to the safes. It's time for you to know them." He swung the safe open and took out

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an old book, bound in some kind of soft pale yellow leather. "I picked this up in Europe some thirty years ago." He came slowly back to his desk and dropped the book on it. "Now for the other safe." He stood still for almost three minutes, breathing softly through his mouth. Then he crossed slowly to the big stand up safe next to the bookcases. "Whatever you do, butterfingers, don't drop the tray. I keep these things activated all the time. It saves work and trouble."

He smiled to himself, opened the safe and took out a cafeteria sized tray and brought it back to his desk. There seemed to be a set of chess pieces, or more likely, two sets on the tray. I glanced down at the figures. They weren't chessmen, but toy soldiers of some kind. I'm near-sighted and I had to get my glasses out to take a good look at the little figures.

By that time my father was standing in front of his desk, looking at the tray. "The staff," he said.

"What are they, sir? From a doll house."

"Take a good look," he said.

I bent down. The figures were dressed in business suits and dresses and skirts. "Very fine workmanship."

"Thank you. I made them myself. You'll find the directions and the recipes in that book."

"You want me to make dolls?"

"The faces," said my father. "Squint, junior. See the faces."

I GUESS I'd been avoiding that. Hey! There's Beckman. And Tom Hockford and Larry O'Brien. And Nancy Ferrier and . . ." I stopped. There was a four inch high doll replica of about half the people who worked for us. I looked up at my father. "You have them for everyone on the floor?"

He nodded. "Our entire staff, yes."

"It's certainly an interesting hobby, sir," I said. "I didn't know you went in for this sort of thing."

"Hobby my knee," he said, looking at the big wall clock. The clock is just like a school room clock, all our clocks are. The hands jumped to 1:40 and my father went around behind his desk. "Time for them to start coming back." He twisted the humidor lid the wrong way and a small drawer clicked out. There was a packet of orange powder in it. "The set of Conrad on the shelf over there is fake. You'll find more of this stuff," he jiggled the packet, "in there. About a year's supply left. Recipe's in this book when you run out. I find making up a two year supply each time is a good idea. It stays effective about that long."

"I see."

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OPENING a side drawer of his desk he pulled it out completely. He set the drawer on his desk next to the tray, sprinkled some powder over the figures on the tray and muttered something I couldn't catch. "Now when you do this, thumbs, be very careful. Don't squeeze." He picked a doll off the tray. It was Carl Kieffer, in accounting. He put the doll into the drawer and took another off the tray. When he'd finished all our employees were back in the drawer and the tray was empty. "Lunch is over."

Dimly through the thick door of his office I could hear the shuffings people make when they return to their desks after lunch.

I knew he wanted me to ask questions. I didn't want to give in, but finally I said, "What is all this exactly, sir?"

"About half voodoo and half European witchcraft. Have you got the system clear in your mind?"

"Voodoo?"

"Look," said my father, "when they're in the drawer they have to work. Except for going to the bathroom and such, that's allowed in the basic spell." He lifted the drawer gingerly and fitted it back into his desk. "When they're on the tray they're at lunch or coffee. I have a special auxiliary spell for doctor's appointments, family troubles, funerals. You'll find it all explained in the book. My marginal notes will show you how the spells can be updated to fit contemporary business needs." He sat back in his chair. "At five sharp you transfer them out of the drawer and back onto the tray. That means they can go home and be on their own until the next morning. If you should want overtime just leave them in the drawer. If you want one of them to come back use a little powder and take him off the tray and put him back in the drawer. That'll fetch him back here in a hurry." He tapped his forefinger on the edge of his desk. "Remember, junior. There's no room for clumsiness. Anything that happens to the dolls while they're activated happens to the person, too. And I keep them activated all the time. You see, to put the doll in sympathy with the person you have to apply an individual spell. It's too much trouble to activate each one every day. So I leave them on." He rocked slightly in his chair. "I was only clumsy once. That's how Hollis broke his leg." He rocked forward and stayed there. "The working and staying on the job spells you can apply to the whole batch. That kind of spell has to be worked everyday. Are you absorbing this?"

I watched my father for a moment. "I'm not sure I understand all you're saying, sir."

"Well," he said, "I don't see

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why not. It's certainly simple enough. Even you should be able to understand it. You'll have to learn to handle it, because when I pass on you, unfortunately, will be running things." He turned away from me and looked out the window.

"Running what?"

He spun back, frowning. "Isn't it obvious enough? You should know by now that you can't trust the average office worker, nor expect him to give a damn. Do you think if you leave them on their own they'll do anything but loaf around and complain about salaries? With these dolls I can control them. I can keep them at their desks, regulate their lunch hours and make certain that I get the maximum of work and efficiency that I am paying them for. He smiled, but not quite at me. "I picked up the book in Provence nearly thirty years ago. The work of a monk who lived in the late 1400's. He was burned as a result of his researches, but a few copies of his book survived. By putting his findings together with my knowledge of the way things are done in Haiti and few other places I came up with these dolls."

"You're saying that all the years I've been working here the people who work for us have been controlled by some kind of magic?"

"Some of this may not seem ethical to you," said my father. "But it isn't always a question of right and wrong. The problem centers around what's best for most people. I've kept a lot of people working with this system, even during Roosevelt's depression."

"You're serious?"

"You bet your life," he said, pushing himself to a standing position. "You're going to learn how to use the dolls. Keever Enterprises will keep going as it has been after I'm gone. You're the only son I have and so you're going to do this and you're not going to let me down."

"All right, father. All right." I shook my head several times. "I'm not feeling well. I'd like to take the afternoon off."

"You might like to," he said, "but you won't. At a quarter to five you'll be right back in here and I'll show you how to send them all home." He sank into his chair like a slowly deflating balloon. "Here. I'll give you the safe combinations." He eased a sheet of paper off the memo pad, wrote some numbers on it and held it out.

I reached down and took it. "Very well, sir. I'll try to start learning them."

"You'll know the combinations before you leave right now. Come on. Get them memorized and then destroy that paper."

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He had me read off the numbers. And then recite them without looking. After about fifteen minutes he was satisfied. "Be back in here at 4:45, junior."

I nodded and started for the door. I stopped, my chest tightening again. "Father," I said.

"Yes, junior?"

"Is there a doll for me?"

"I don't need one for you," he said.

OUTSIDE I tried not to look at anyone. I didn't have a door on my office but I sat facing away from everyone.

I got out the file of letters I'd been checking through and opened it. Gradually, as I went over what he had said in my mind, I came to feel that this was probably another of his tricks. Some elaborate prank he spent months working out.

But as I went back to his office just before quitting time I found I still couldn't bring myself to look directly at anyone. If someone called a greeting I waved without turning my head.

I couldn't even face Miss Spaulding squarely when I asked to see my father.

When I was back inside with him he said," Let's hear the combinations, junior."

I had a feeling I was going to stammer, but I got hold of myself and, even though he was saying, "Come on, come on", I took my time and recited the numbers correctly.

"Well," said my father, putting the drawer up on his desk again. "You did very well. Now stand by. I'll get the tray and you can help me put them away for today."

Getting my glasses on I looked into the drawer. Each doll had its own private pigeon hole.

My father got the empty tray from the safe and brought it back, putting it next to the drawer. At exactly five he started taking the dolls out of the drawer and putting them back on the tray. "You can lift a few, junior. Do it gently, not too much thumb."

From the outer office, filtered by the thick door, came faint sounds of people leaving.

When the dolls were all back on the tray my father said, "They're on their own until tomorrow. You'll be here at 7:30 sharp to start them on their way to work."

FOR the next two days we went through the same ritual. I wasn't able to get much sleep. Naturally enough I kept dreaming about dolls and tiny offices filled with very small employees.

Then on a Friday, nearly a month ago, my father died. We had put the dolls all on their tray and he had locked them away in the safe, on their own for the

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weekend. The offices were empty and I had gone back to my desk to pick up a batch of work I was taking home. The walls of my father's office are so substantial that I never heard him fall. But when I went back and knocked my knock nothing happened. I tried the knock twice and then went in, prepared to apologize. He was on the floor, quite still.

It flashed through my mind that this might be some joke of his. That if I cried out he would jump up and smile at me. Still I knew he was dead. And, quietly and efficiently, in a very business like manner, I took care of all the details.

Work at Keever Enterprises resumed on the following Wednesday. When I arrived that morning, a little after nine, I found all our employees there. Apparently they didn't need the dolls to make them come in. As I began to fall into the routine of managing the business I came to feel that the dolls had been simply another of my father's elaborate tests.

I did look through the monk's book. I studied it and my father's penciled in instructions and additions. I could find no formula for de-activating the dolls. There were a great many erasures and corrections and I may have missed it. Then, too, there was quite a lot of it I just didn't understand.

The dolls themselves I left locked away. The people in the office came and went more casually, but I figured that was simply because my father was gone and I was known to be unlike him. I didn't want to believe it was because I wasn't sprinkling orange powder on the dolls every morning.

As I sat here, trying to keep my mind on the running of Keever Enterprises, I kept looking at the safe that held the dolls. I made up my mind I didn't want them here. The thing to do was move them. I'd store them in the family home on Pacific Heights, where I was now living again. Put them up in the attic, wrapped in cotton. That was the answer. Put them away and forget them.

I knew my father wanted me to be bothered by the dolls. He'd expected me to fool around with them, experiment. Even do research on the theories behind them. No more. Now that he was dead I wasn't going to spend one more day of my life checking his stories and testing his lies.

At noon today—and I took two hours for lunch and had two gibsons—I got a large box and lots of tissue paper from the gift wrapping department at I. Magnin's. I had to give them ten dollars before they'd give me the box without anything in it.

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I came back here and went over to the big safe. It took me three tries but I finally got the combination right and opened it. I carefully got out the tray of dolls.

Just short of the desk I tripped on a dropped pencil and the tray slammed against the desk and then fell toward the floor. I tried to catch the tray but I lost my balance all together and fell forward on top of the tray and the dolls.

I made quite a lot of noise when I fell. But I'm almost certain I heard shouting and cries of pain from outside, through the heavy door. Every last doll is broken, one way or another. I haven't heard a sound from out there since then.

I don't know what to do. I'm afraid to look outside into the offices. I have the feeling that somehow I've done exactly what my father expected me to do. He's criticized my clumsiness since I was five years old.

THE END

NEW WORLDS

continued from page 114

steam stopped. Another cloud followed, then another. As the third cloud of steam was emerging, the sound of the first whistle came to their ears.

"Three whistles!" said Phil. "A salute! They see us!"

Professor Parker nodded his satisfaction.

"Now," he said, "we can get some authentic news. If there are any unsubmerged continents that have survived the period of stress equalization and tidal inundations, they doubtless have sent out radio broadcasts. And you will notice that the boat retains its radio equipment.

Phil turned to the girl.

"Suppose," he said in a low voice, "there are no more continents, and we have to begin life anew. Would you—er—I mean, is there anybody, such as a husband, that you left behind?"

She laughed at him, extended her left hand.

"Not even engaged," she said.

Phil grinned.

"In that case," he observed, "you ought to be ready to take things as they come, Miss Ranson."

"Yes," she said; "it's a new world, and I'm ready for it. I'm not afraid of the future . . . and you'd better begin calling me Stella, Phil."

And Phil Bregg, his face lighted with a zest for life, grinned at her.

"Bring on the new world," he said. "I like the people in it!"

THE END

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FANTASY BOOKS

By S. E. COTTS

Editor's Note: From time to time we will take space in FANTASTIC *to comment on books of specific interest to fantasy fans. Two new reprints, issued by the Xanadu Library as part of its ambitious program for reviving classics of fantasy and science-fantasy, are, we feel, worth telling you about.*

The Worm Ouroboros. *By E. R. Eddison. Illustrated by Keith Henderson. 445 pp. Crown Publishers, Inc. Paper: $1.95.*

Eric Rucker Eddison, the author of this remarkable romance, was not a writer by trade, but a successful English civil servant. *The Worm Ouroboros* was written in 1922 and first published in the U.S.A. in 1926. Its reception here was nothing short of remarkable. While there were some critics who did not care for it, almost all of them could not deny that here was a fresh and highly original imagination at work.

This is a romantic epic in the grand manner. Do not be put off by the clumsy way in which Eddison maneuvers to get to the heart of the story, which is to send Lessingham, an English gentleman, to Mercury in a magic dream. Once he gets there in order to observe, the author forgets all about him (which is just as well) and gets on with the real business—the war between the Kingdom of Witchland and that of Demonland. The King of Witchland is Gorice XI, a really marvelous villain who gets put down in the end by the three noble leaders of Demonland. But before this fall, we are treated to heroic deeds, perilous journeys and countless battles told in a style which has the richness of a tapestry. In spite of the scheming, betrayal and treason portrayed, the characters are not subtly drawn. They are heroes of the kind found in the old sagas, set down with large bold strokes. As Orville Prescott says in his introduction, "It's their adventures which count, not their minds." Nevertheless, the book bears little relation to the abbreviated narratives which appear under the guise of adventure stories today. I invite our readers to read this classic work and see how rich an experience the adventure story *can* be in the right hands.

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The Revolt of the Angels. *By Anatole France. Translated by Mrs. Wilfrid Jackson. 348 pp. Crown Publishers, Inc. Paper: $1.45.*

Anatole France (the pseudonym of Jacques Anatole Thibault) was born in Paris in 1844. Unlike E. R. Eddison's part-time literary pursuits, France was one of the dominant figures in French literature with a stature that many feel was comparable to that of Voltaire. He was an incurable skeptic, an opponent of church and state, and an active writer for progressive causes. *The Revolt of the Angels* was first published in the U.S. in 1914 and immediately attracted comment from all sources. It is a witty, shrewd and ultimately serious satire.

In the heavenly order are guardian angels whose job it is to watch over us poor mortals. The scope and difficulty of their jobs depend, naturally, on the kind of life led by the humans involved. Maurice d'Esparvieu's angel, for instance, has a lot of leisure time, as Maurice frequently needs to sleep off the effects of being a gay blade around town. The angel spends his spare time in the great library amassed by previous generations of Maurice's family. And here the trouble begins, for the library contains not only devotional works but scientific theses, and, confronted by the seeming contradictions between the two, the angel loses his faith in God. He assumes earthly form and discovers that he is not alone. There are many other fallen angels for him to fraternize with. So they band together and organize a revolt against heaven.

You can see how many targets such a plot would offer to a man like France. His work was revolutionary in a real sense, and the effect of this satire on the sacred edifices of tradition far outweighs in importance any ideas that are found in *The Worm Ouroboros*. Yet it is Eddison's work that provides the most meaningful experience today—Eddison who probably never agitated to change anything, but who was content to escape from reality in his dreams of another way of life. And that is because the problems a writer rants at in one age may have completely changed and become dated by the next, but they are usually always replaced by new problems so that the literature of escape never becomes unnecessary. How ironical that the work of the greater man turns out to be shorter-lived! But I don't feel unjust to France in making such a statement because it is perhaps partly due to him, and others of his sort, that times have changed.

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(*Continued from page 6*)

all right, but not in sf/fantasy mags? Is that your opinion, you many Bunch-o-phobes? I don't agree. I hope that Mr. Bunch braves the elements of staunch fandom, and returns to these pages.

Whitley's "Change of Heart" is minor, but enjoyable. Only, he (the main character) should have no change of heart; after all, it is the porpoise that is malevolent, not the whale. This story to be classified in the category of good fun.

Douglas Bodkin
24 Mariposa Lane
Orinda, California

● *Welcome to the battlefield. You can be pretty sure that the future will see Mr. Bunch contributing more to fan the flames of controversy.*

Dear Editor:

For a long time I have enjoyed reading your letter column, but this is my first contribution to it. I feel that your magazine should be congratulated for printing such stories as "Planet of Dread" by Murray Leinster, "The Star Fisherman" by Robert F. Young, "The Red Flowers of Tulp" by Joseph E. Kelleam and especially from the August issue of last year "Goodbye, Atlantis" by Poul Anderson, and "Stranger in Paradox" by Keith Laumer. Your magazine is beyond compare when it comes to printing good science fiction and superb fantasy. The art work is always intriguing with Adkins as your best illustrator. Another new artist you had in the April issue, Domeri by name, has quite a knack at doing weird creatures. George Schelling and George Barr should be congratulated on turning out such striking cover paintings. Illustrator Leo Summers does his best work on Fritz Leiber's sagas of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. Keep both of them locked up in a dark cell producing gloriously illustrated imaginative fictional masterpieces.

After such lavish praise I'm sure you will be inclined to comply with a few minor requests. First, find a good Henry Kuttner story for your Fantasy Reprint Section and second, please print more serials. Also could you tell me all of Henry Kuttner's pseudonyms that he used while writing this own brand of science fiction and fantasy. Keep up the good work.

Jack H. Neigenfind
R.D. #1, P.O. Box 123,
Montoursville, Penna.

● *You'll find most of the information you want concerning Henry Kuttner in the October* AMAZING *which will feature a Kuttner profile.*

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Dear Editor:

The cover for your June FANTASTIC, by George Barr was magnificent weird in some ways, and it illustrated a *fantasy*. I still maintain though that there should be *more* fantasy in FANTASTIC.

In the June issue, the only real fantasy was the Bunch story, which I thought was surprisingly good for once. By the way, I've heard a rumor: that David R. Bunch is really a pseudonym for R. Bretnor . . . Is this true? There are some similarities in style and such.

The story by Bloch was good, but I don't think deserved the title *fantasy* classic. To me it was simple science fiction. Since when is old fashioned time travel classed as fantasy?

The new novel by Poul Anderson started off just fine with a solid adventure format in the beginning, which suddenly—and almost too abruptly—changed to a plot of a "good guy joining in with the bad guys against the corrupt government." I'm looking forward to the next issue for the climax. And speaking of the next ish, it really looks promising, especially with J. G. Ballard.

Bob Adolfsen
9 Prospect Ave.
Sea Cliff, N.Y.

● *David R. Bunch is D. R. B. and none other.*

Dear Editor:

Your June FANTASTIC was one of the best issues you have published. For once, I actually enjoyed a Robert F. Young story ("The Star Fisherman") and a fantasy classic (Bloch's "The Past Master") in the same issue.

GET RID OF BUNCH! !.! ! ! Why don't we have a vote—like another magazine did when it changed format—and see how many fans like and dislike him? I'll bet that would shock you out of your complacency.

J. A. Cox's "Rain, Rain, Go Away" was nothing short of a little masterpiece. This is the best short story in FANTASTIC since Eckhert's "Voice Box."

"Shield" started off a little too slowly—not slow, exactly, but not real interesting, like "The Man Who Had No Brains," for example. Although he isn't in this issue, I see that J. G. Ballard is coming up. Good. He is the best new author I have seen in a long time. I particularly enjoyed "The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista," and hope that you can get some more off-trail stories like this.

Chuck Cunningham
822 Cherokee Rd. NE
Gainesville, Ga.

● *We had a vote on Bunch. Some people liked him, some hated him. You can't please everybody all the time. But we try, anyway.*

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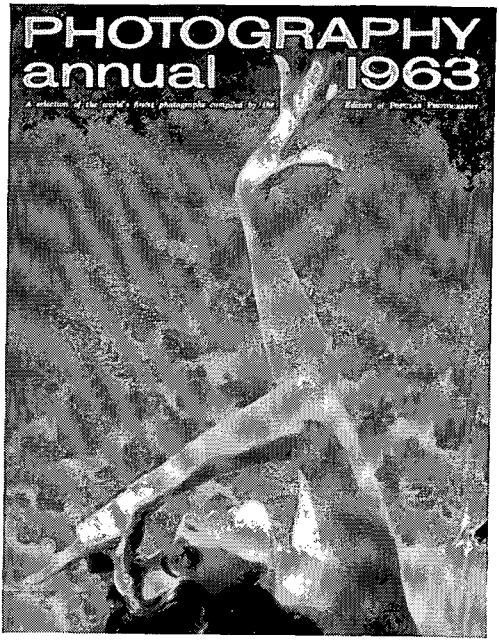

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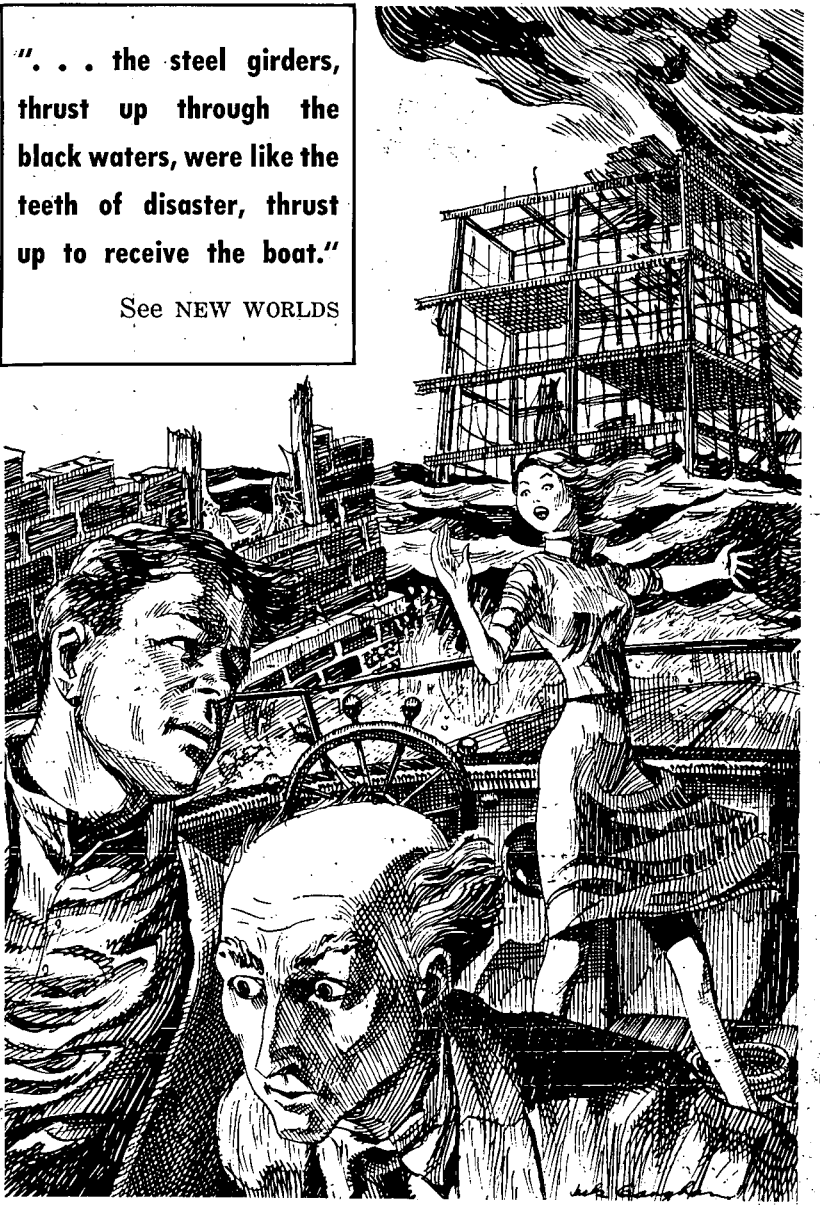

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